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PART I.

HOW LITTLE MABEL CAME TO BARTLEPOOL.

I.—LAMBE OF LAMBE'S WASTE.

"Sound at last!" said Martha Parr, bending softly over her father as he dozed in his arm-chair." I thought the worry about the missing ship would have spoiled his nap."

Then softly, on tiptoe, she stole over to the great window and looked out musingly. The snow was falling like a white veil all over the quay, and though the house stood only some hundred yards above high water mark, there was not a peep to be seen of the sea.

"The wind's down, that's a comfort," she murmured to herself, "and may be after all Captain Seth may find his way home."

As she spoke, she heard faintly, from the direction of the village, the somewhat wheezy sound of the Waits, and, craning her neck round close to the window, she gazed in the direction whence the sound came, but could see nothing through the moving whiteness of the troubled snow. Presently, with a deep sigh, more to relieve the physical weight of silence than to give vent to any secret trouble of the heart, she crossed the dark room and came again into the firelight where her father was sleeping. The firelight, glad to have something bright to shine upon, illumined her from head to foot, showing the figure of as plump and straight a little lass as ever drew health from the ocean breezes.

The old man slept soundly, and one had not far to look to discover the cause. On the deal table, still spread with the remains of a simple meal, stood a half emptied flagon of wine. The sleeper's rubicund cheeks and highly reddened nose shone with Bardolphian gleam under his snow-white hair, telling a tale of good cheer, which his small frame and little shrunken legs seemed to contradict. For the rest, his dress was a dingy snuff-coloured suit of old fashioned cut, with a very deep lappeted waistcoat, knee-breeches, and thick woollen hose.

As he slept he snored, and from time to time muttered to himself, at which signs of disturbance his daughter raised her eyebrows and shook her head. Then she stood with her back to the great wood fire, holding her brown hands to the blaze, and watching him.

The wood crackled and blazed, shooting out crimson flickering rays all over the chamber; glimmering on the black rafters overhead, from which depended divers flitches of bacon, coils of rope, pieces of tarpaulin; making a mirror of the black polished floor; showing the barrels piled upon one another in the corners, and the divers other samples of ships' stores scattered here and there. Over the mantelpiece there was a cuckoo clock; but the door of the cuckoo's box had grown so rusty that it would never open, and all one heard at the full hours was a wild momentary struggle, as the bird tried in vain to spring out. In a corner, from a wooden peg, hung a sou'-wester and a suit of tarpaulins; and below these, leaning against the wall, a rusty gun, very long in the barrel, and very rickety about the lock.

It was a large antique room, and belonged to what had been in its time a fine house, but which was now so worn, wind-beaten, and rat-eaten, as scarcely to be habitable. The gabled recess of the window, with its worn wooden seat, was of solid oak; and the window itself, which was fashioned of small diamond panes, opened down almost to the ground.

Suddenly, as the girl stood looking at her father, there was a loud knocking. Almost immediately afterwards, a shock-headed girl, of about fourteen years of age, bearing about her all the immemorial characteristics of the maid-of-all-work, rushed into the room.

"Mistress Martha! Mistress!"

"What is it, Keziah?" said Martha, pointing to her father, and putting her finger on her lips.

Keziah, thus warned, gasped like a fish, and sunk her voice to a husky whisper.

"Squire Lambe be at the door; he have ridden over on the black mare from Lambe's Waste, and he be a-coming in."

The announcement was by no means premature, for at that moment the door of the room was darkened by the figure of the individual in question—a tall, black-browed, black-eyed man, with a bull-neck and a bull's manners, dressed in hunting boots and smalls, and carrying a riding-whip. His dark face was disfigured by a heavy scowl; his mouth, which was full and sensual, by an habitual sneer. His hands, which were tolerably white, were covered with rings, and in his neckcloth he wore a great coarse brooch. He was clean shaven, and his hair was cropped very close—so that every phrenological and physiognomical point of him was seen in perfection.

"A pretty house!" he growled, shaking his whip. "No sooner had that red-haired lass opened the door than she fled as if she had seen the devil, and left me to grope my way into this infernal den."

"Please hush, Sir," said Martha, while Keziah, with positive horror in her fish-like eyes—for Squire Lambe had a reputation as a very fire-eater among women—backed quickly out of the room. "Father's sleeping."

"Then I'll awake him," returned Lambe, sharply rattling on a cask with his whip. "Here, Amos Parr."

The old man started, mumbled, and began to rub his eyes.

"God bless me," he cried, waking at last. "What's that?"

"It's me—Squire Lambe," said the visitor, standing over him with square shoulders and brow-beating scowl.

Half asleep and half awake, but clearly by no means edified at the visit, Amos Parr looked feebly up, and murmured, "Bless me! Martha, my glasses"; and when his daughter had taken a pair of horn spectacles from the mantelpiece and adjusted them on his nose, he continued to blink up over them mildly, and wait for what might come next.

"You've been dining, I see," said Lambe, tapping the flagon with his whip; "and wine-ing too. Strange, the infatuation you old men have for that sort of poison."

"I suppose," murmured Amos timidly, "I mustn't offer you a glass?"

"No," was the sharp reply; followed by, after a moment's pause, "Come, I suppose you know what brought me here?"

"I can guess, Sir," said Amos, fidgeting in his waistcoat pocket nervously with forefinger and thumb, and seeking an imaginary pinch of snuff. "That—that money."

"Yes. Is it ready?"

"No."

"Oh!" interrupted Martha, nervously. "Father will pay you."

"When?" asked Lambe, sternly, not looking at her, but keeping his eyes on Amos.

"Without fail," said Amos—"when the Mary Jane comes in."

Lambe gave a short, fierce laugh.

"The Mary Jane never will return—she is food for fishes; and I shall wait no longer. Amos Parr, I mean to sell you up!"

The old man started violently.

"You won't do that?"

"Oh, no, no!" interjected Martha.

"Did you ever know me break my word? When I said I'd give you a month's time, I gave you a month's time. When I say that I shall wait no longer, I shall wait no longer. You understand?"

"I do, I do," said Amos, trembling violently.

There was a pause. The wooden cuckoo made a violent effort to break out and announce that it was six o'clock, but the only result was a commotion of the old clock's works, and a sound like a death rattle. Amos kept his eyes on the ground, while Lambe still watched him scowlingly and narrowly.

"Stay, though," said Lambe at last, "I gave you an alternative."

Amos started more violently than ever, glanced nervously at Martha, but did not speak.

"What was that, father?" asked the girl.

"Nothing, nothing," returned the old man, finding his voice with some difficulty. "Leave us, child. Let me speak to the gentleman alone."

The eyes of father and daughter met, and in answer to the dumb entreaty Martha, with whom obedience was a habit, quietly left the room. There was another long pause, broken at last by Lambe.

"Well?"

"No, Sir," returned Amos, with an air of decision unusual to him. "I've thought it over, and it can't be."

The coarse lips tightened, the heavy brows came down still lower.

"Why not?"

"Don't speak of it, Sir—it's impossible."

"Amos Parr," said Lambe, seating himself on a corner of the table, and squaring his shoulders more than ever, "you're forgetting who I am."

"No, Sir—I am *not*."

"I'm Squire Lambe of Lambe's Waste, master of man, woman, and beast for twelve square miles around. I never forget nor forgive. With a word I can make or mar a man like you. You know that?"

"Yes, Sir."

"And when I, Lambe of Lambe's Waste, say to you—to you, Amos Parr, a pauper, a beggar, whom I hold in the hollow of my hand—give me your daughter; let me marry her—you refuse?"

"I must, Sir," answered Amos firmly, looking up and meeting the other's eye.

"You dog!" cried Lambe, purple with rage, shaking his whip in the old man's face.

The ice thus broken, Amos Parr seemed to gain courage. He was sufficiently collected to take an imaginary pinch of snuff.

"Be reasonable, Sir," he said in a low voice. "Mabel is no daughter of mine, though, God knows, I've loved her like one, since the day Antony Reilly placed her, a little year-old babe, in these two arms. I cannot control her wish or will."

"Have you spoken to her of this at all?" asked Lambe sternly.

"No, Sir," replied Amos, "but I know"——

"*You* know?" echoed Lambe, with a savage sneer. "Let me speak to the girl herself. Is she at home?" and, without waiting for an answer, he added, with overbearing impulse, rattling with his whip on the table, "Ho there! within!"

Amos Parr was about to protest, with some indignation, and possibly to deny the presence in the house of the person demanded, but at that moment a voice cried, from the very air above his head, "Father, did you call?"

Turning quickly, Lambe beheld her whom he sought, descending the black wooden staircase which led down into the great chamber from the upper part of the house. She carried a rush-light, which she shaded with her hand, as she paused on the staircase, looking down.

A face of almost ghastly pallor, set in such golden hair as is only heard of in the pages of moonstruck German poets; large wistful eyes of deepest grey, under eyebrows absolutely dark, a broad brow, a small ripe mouth, a chin not too large, rounded, yet full of power and purpose. The figure was slight, almost frail, and tall, the feet and hands perfect, the bust very fine and full.

A girl of eighteen years, she was clothed much in the same manner as Martha Parr, in coarse serge and homespun, and she had been reared, under the same conditions, on rough fare, amid wild weather, by the side of the sea. But the same salt breath which gave Martha ruddy cheeks and a brown skin left no tint of redness on this other face, which kept its deep and lovely pallor through all seasons, yet retained the firmness and freshness of perfect health. "Gentle blood defies gruff weather," saith the proverb; and it was only necessary to set the two maidens side by side to show that they were not sisters. Seen alone, Martha seemed a comely and even a fine-nurtured girl, with her brave eyes and her warm skin; but when Mabel was by Martha Parr became almost rude and common—so strangely does Nature distinguish between the coarse and fine materials with which she works her miracles of life.

Surprised by this pretty apparition, Lambe put on his company manners and made a bow. Then, subdued but unabashed, he feasted his eyes on the maiden as she came gently down into the chamber.

Amos trembled violently, but seemed more uncomfortable than ever, while Mabel drew close and took his hand with a child's affection.

"I fear we have disturbed you," said Lambe, smiling.

"You did disturb me," answered the girl, coldly and with the indifference of utter unsuspicion. "I was reading."

"Some good book, I trust?" suggested Lambe, with a leer. "May I see it?"

He held out his hand carelessly, and, taking the book, he turned over the leaves with no little contempt.

"Poetry? Humph! You like poetry? Most young dames do. But methinks you read too much. You lack air and sunshine. If you would only mount a steed some day, and gallop over to Lambe's Waste—'tis a pretty ride!"

"Mabel has never been a-horseback," said Amos, nervously.

"If she were my wife," exclaimed Lambe with emphasis, his bold eyes fixed on her face, "I'd teach her to *hunt*."

Amos trembled, and clutched the little hand in his own. The girl started, and turned her large eyes calmly on Lambe's face.

"Your wife?" she said, raising her eyebrows gently.

Squire Lambe bowed and smiled his best.

"Why not, little one? Perhaps you mislike me too much?"

"No, no; it is not that," murmured Amos, apologetically.

"Let the maiden speak for herself," cried Lambe sternly; then he continued in his former tone of gallantry, "Come, should you not like to mate with Squire Lamb? Is he too old, or too common? Is he halt or lame? Is he a man among men, or a rogue and a cipher? Name my faults—I may try to amend them."

Still perfectly self-possessed, looking steadily at him with her truthful eyes, the girl replied,

"Sir, you must first mend your disposition."

"How?"

"The people say you have no heart, Sir, and never yet did gentle deed; that your companions are not good men, but reisterers and Sabbath-breakers; that you have no pity for man or beast; and that good women shudder when they name your name."

This truth-telling with a vengeance; but, curiously enough, it seemed to tickle the savage Squire, for he struck his whip against his thigh, and fell into loud laughter.

"A true picture—what say you, Amos Parr?"

Amos opened his hands in polite protestation, but the other, not heeding him, turned to Mabel, and sank his voice, with a total change of manner.

"You paint me as men see me; but remember those who hate well can love well too. Wed me, and I will teach you to live. There shall ever be a maid at your elbow, serving men to attend you, a good nag saddled for you to ride. You shall be mistress of Lambe's Waste, courted and envied of all. Come!"

Something in his eyes made the girl shrink away and look at him in positive fear.

"Father," she murmured, "is the gentleman in earnest or in jest?"

"In jest, only in jest?" said Amos, fondling her hand.

"Amos Parr," exclaimed Lambe fiercely, "I never jest. Come, is it a bargain?"

"No, Sir,—it can never be."

Lambe turned to Mabel.

"What say you, mistress?"

"What my father says," answered the girl in a clear voice. "It can never be, Sir."

For some moments Lambe stood looking at her in insolent astonishment and admiration; not offended, but rather won by her frank plain-speaking.

"Good," he said at last, with a peculiar smile. "Perhaps you will think better of it; and, at all events, I break my heart for no woman." Then turning to Amos, he said, "Amos Parr, I will give you three more days. Let me see! This is Monday; Thursday is Christmas Eve."

"Yes, Sir."

"Unless I am paid every groat before twelve o'clock on Christmas Eve, I shall realise on your estate. Judgment is given, as you know, and if you are a wise man you will raise the money."

"It is impossible. Sir, I beseech you—give me more time."

"Not an hour. Good-night!"

As he strode to the door, he added with a short laugh, waving his hand to Mabel, "Think it over! We may hunt Lambe's Waste together yet!"

Crossing the threshold of the room, he encountered Martha, who was just returning, and pinched her plump cheek with coarse familiarity, very different from his manner of treating her foster-sister. Martha tossed her head and flushed angrily, while Lambe passed out across the kitchen, and crashed the outer door behind him.

Meanwhile Amos Parr, looking as pale as it was possible for so rubicund a veteran to look, had sunk into his arm-chair, as if overpowered by the visitation. Mabel bent over him, and Martha ran to join her. Thus employed, the two maidens contrasted strangely with each other—Mabel being to Martha what some delicate lily of the garden is to some robust flower of the wayside.

II.—LITTLE MABEL.

The little seaport town of Bartlepool lay, like some decayed mariner of the human species, half buried and forgotten in one of the loneliest reaches of the east coast of England, looking with an ancient and fish-like gaze right across the waste waters to the distant flats of Holland. It had once been prosperous and well-to-do, but that was hundreds of years past,—when bearded mariners of all climes trod the narrow streets, and when the hammering of shipbuilding was heard night and day on the banks of the little river; but at the time of which we write, when George the Third was King, the occupation of Bartlepool had almost passed away for ever.

Signs of the old prosperity, however, still remained, in desolate wharves sloping to the waterside, in large disused warehouses many of which had fallen into positive decay, in an old custom-house now haunted by a few idle coastguardsmen, and in a tumbledown and lopsided Townhall, among the dusty archives of which bilgewatery records of great shipping transactions were still preserved with veneration. But the once-prosperous trade was now confined to a few coasting schooners and small foreign traders, and the population had dwindled down to about a thousand weather-beaten souls, all told.

Inland, the little sluggish river crept out of bright green fens till it reached the sandy tract stretching for miles and miles on the side of the sea.

Near to the little town, there were small signs of habitation or human energy, save a few lonely farms of the amphibious order cut up geometrically with dykes and ditches, and an occasional water-mill, turned sleepily by one of the river's narrow arms. But to right and left of Bartlepool, on the coast, the sand-hills rolled like the billows of a yellow sea, surmounted with coarse tufts of weed and canna-grass, and deepening here and there to emerald stretches of arid pasture land. When the wind blew, the sand flew as thick as foam, forming itself into miniature cyclones, and hiding earth and sky; and, under the influence of wind and weather, the sand-hills themselves were always shifting their shapes, to the bewilderment of the oldest inhabitant. The sea-sands, however, wherever the tide reached them, were hard and firm, forming, at low water, mighty stretches where a horseman might gallop for many miles.

Owing to the dangerous character of the shallow coast, it was quite impossible to approach the harbour of Bartlepool, except under experienced pilotage; and under any circumstances it could never be entered at low tide. Every night a red light burned at the end of the old pier, to warn off unwary ships, and to guide in those who knew the harbour. But vessels of large tonnage generally gave that coast a wide enough berth. From time to time, however, there was a great ship-wreck, especially in winter, when the nor'-easter blew right in on the sands; and when the news of shipwreck spread, there would suddenly swarm out of the lonely town, and out of the surrounding sand-hills, and out of the amphibious districts beyond, men, women, and children, as thick as wasps and as hungry as wolves, in the quest for plunder. Dark tales were told of what ensued on those pitiable occasions; of how the struggling survivors of the wreck were mercilessly stript and, perhaps, knocked on the head, the dead mutilated for the sake of their precious rings, the fainting and exhausted plundered and left to die, in accordance with the familiar superstition that it is a luckless thing to rescue any creature from a watery grave.

*This story is founded on a drama written by the author, registered, performed, and duly protected. All dramatic rights, here and abroad, are therefore reserved.—R. B.

On a terrible night of tempest during the autumn equinox, eighteen years before the opening of our tale, a large ship had gone to pieces on the Wantle reef, an ugly tuft of sand and rock about five miles, as the crow flies, north of Bartlepool, and rather more than a mile from shore. How the tidings were blown about it is difficult to say, but at daybreak the sands were covered with swarms of wild creatures, of all sizes and sexes, looking hungrily to sea. Only the black hull of the ship remained, with no sign of living beings; but here and there on the waters were dark floating masses, pieces of wood, and floating bales and casks. The sea from the shore to the reef was churned to one mass of white foam; but, owing to the shallowness of the water, the waves were not high.

A broken ship's boat had already been washed ashore, and two puncheons of rum—one staven open and empty, the other full to the bung. With shrieks of delight, the full puncheon had been seized and broken open, but before its contents could be well distributed it was spilt incautiously among the sands and rocks—where it ran like blood, and was lapped up by many who lay, face downwards, and drank like dogs. The ship, in fact, was a huge trader from Jamaica, laden chiefly with the sugary fluid. Presently other puncheons drifted in, the wretches rushing in waist deep to drag them to shore; and before long the result was easily perceived, in flushed faces, flaming eyes, wild oaths and yells. Soon nearly every man, woman, and child of that mad throng, with the exception of a few wary spirits, who had kept sober for plunder, had drunk to repletion; some danced and sung, others rolled helpless on the sand, others again fought and yelled, while here and there the broken puncheons welled out into great purple pools, slowly lapped up by the parched sands. One or two coastguardsmen, with a few mounted tradesmen from the town, in vain tried to keep order, and at last gave up the effort in despair.

As the morning advanced, several corpses were washed ashore, surrounded, and stripped. Most were common sailors, but nearly all had finger-rings, ear-rings, or other jewellery. One, who looked like the captain of the vessel, wore a valuable watch and chain, for which there was an ugly and prolonged struggle, resulting in the stabbing and wounding of several men. Another doomed victim was a poor negro woman, drest in white cotton, and clutching in her black hands what seemed a portion of human hair.

If there had been any fragment of human pity subsisting in the hearts of the wild beasts who thronged the shore, it had been all destroyed by the rum. The affair was already an orgie, as well as a loot. In the intervals of plunder, while waiting for more booty to gloat in, they drank, they yelled, they sang and danced—the women, wild, ragged creatures, joining madly in. Close to one of the broken puncheons was seen a hideous spectacle—a drunken woman from the town sitting in a pool of rum, taking the thin infant from her naked breast, and grinning imbecilely as she held it down to taste the liquid fire.

Suddenly there was a wild shriek, and many hands pointed seaward. From the side of a sandy promontory, about a mile away, a small boat shot out upon the waters, carrying the merest shred of a sail.

The point whence it started was sheltered from the fury of the sea by an outlying reef of rocks, and at first it had slipped along in smoothish water; but the moment it left the shelter the white sea seized it, and tore at it, and smothered it with breaking foam.

One man sat in the stern, guiding it with an oar. Every moment the fierce sea seemed about to envelop both man and boat, and again and again they were lost to view; but, ever re-emerging, they slipped along, making a clean "board" seaward in the direction of the ship.

"It 's the mad Irishman!" cried several voices.

Drunk as they were, they forgot their work in watching the man, expecting every moment to see him overwhelmed. Every time the sea seemed to break over him they uttered a low groan; every time he re-emerged, the groan changed into a yell of amazement.

Though the sail was but a shred, the wind was so strong that the little boat went at lightning speed. As it grew nearer and nearer to the reef, the seas grew heavy, and it plunged and dived more dangerously. At last it came under the lee of the ship, when, springing up, the man tore down his sail and took to his oars.

The water was breaking round the black hull, which threatened every moment to break up and disappear. The man rowed closer through the surge, and his boat hung suspended on the incoming waves, while he waited his chance to approach. Suddenly they saw him ply his oars rapidly. The boat shot in like a bird, and disappeared in a cloud of foam. They held their breath, thinking that all was over. A minute afterwards they saw the boat in the smooth water, close under the ship's side, while, rope in hand, the man leapt on board.

A wild yell of mingled wonder and admiration rose from the shore.

What would happen next? They saw the figure struggling on the slippery decks, now appearing, now disappearing; then it disappeared altogether. There was a long interval. At last they saw the man re-emerge, struggling towards the ship's side with something in his arms.

Plunder, as they thought.

The flying foam now hid him from their sight, but they strained their eyes and watched. Suddenly, out of the stormy whiteness, they saw the boat emerge, making for the shore.

This time the man did not hoist his sail at all, but kept to his oars, and it was clear that it required all his skill and seamanship to keep the boat from foundering. His progress, on the return voyage, was very slow, for the wind was on the boat's quarter, and the waves behind. Nevertheless, he progressed in safety, though laboriously. As he neared the place from which he had started, the crowd rushed along the sands and clustered on the promontory, waiting to see him come in.

Close under the shelter of the promontory there was a tiny creek of golden sand, where the sea was scarcely ruffled by the gale. As he slipped into the smooth water and approached, the crowd cheered him vociferously, but watched with jealous hungry eyes to see what plunder he brought.

Rowing in swiftly, he grounded the boat, and leaped in waist deep to drag it in to the dry shore. He was a powerful man, bareheaded, wearing only shirt, breeches, and long sea-boots. Directly the boat was safe, he stooped over it and lifted something in his arms. As he did so, he was surrounded on every side by crying women and men.

"Stand out of the way!" he cried, clutching his burden.

They fell back a little, but still surrounded him. Then a savage-looking ruffian, in rude quasi-nautical attire, put a hand upon his shoulder.

"What have you got there, mate?"

It was needless to ask, for at that moment the wind lifted the folds of a rich Indian shawl which covered it, and showed the face of a little child!

Dead or alive? It was hard to tell, but the face was pale as death, and the little eyes were closed.

Another cry rose, greedy hands were thrust out to clutch the shawl, but with a thrust of his strong shoulders the man sent the crowd flying in all directions.

"Back, every mother's son of ye!" he cried. "I'll brain the first man that lays a finger on it!"

"Share and share alike, Antony Reilly!" said the ruffian who had first spoken.

Without deigning to reply, the man ran with his burden up the promontory, and on to the adjacent sands. The crowd followed behind him, panting and yelling; but he did not halt until he reached a small group of coastguardsmen, with whom were a few of the more respectable townspeople, several on horseback.

"Are ye there, Mr. Parr?" he cried, addressing one of the riders, a little middle-aged man dressed in decent broadcloth. "For the love of God, look at what I'm carrying, and see if it's dead or living!"

As he spoke, panting and trembling, he tenderly drew off the shawl, and revealed the half-naked form of a year-old infant, with blue eyes and golden hair.

"Why, it 's a little child," said the person he had just addressed, alighting, and bending over it. "And living, sure enough!"

For at that moment the infant opened its eyes, struggled in its captor's arms, and began to cry feebly.

"Look at that, now!" exclaimed Antony Reilly, with a broad grin.

Then, in a few hurried sentences he proceeded to explain how, entering the ship's cabin, which was partially filled with water, he had discovered there the figure of a dead man, who seemed to have been surprised, crushed, and stifled when in the very act of rescuing the child—perhaps his own; for floating on the water, amidst pillows, bedding, and articles of ship's furniture, was a little cradle, wherein, Moses-like, the child, with the shawl wrapped around it, lay as if sleeping. Warned by the crashing of the hulk, which seemed about to split asunder, he had snatched the child up in his arms and rushed back to his boat, and finally had succeeded, almost by a miracle, in carrying his prize to shore.

"But it 's perishing wid the cold," he cried, as he concluded his narration. "Mr. Parr, your honour, may I mount the mare?"

"Certainly," said the person addressed.

Antony handed the child over to him for a moment, while he leapt into the saddle.

"Where are you going to take it?" asked the little man, as he placed the child in the Irishman's arms.

"Where, but to your own house, and to your own wife—good-luck to her!" was the reply. And without another word, the man galloped away in the direction of the town.

A few hours later, a small group was assembled in the old-fashioned room described in our opening chapter. Before a roaring fire sat a motherly woman, the wife of Amos Parr, the ship's chandler, holding in her lap the little waif which had just been snatched from the sea. By her side, clinging to her dress, was Martha, a little maiden of three. Close by, in his easy-chair, sat the master of the house, blinking complacently; and in the ingleside stood the hero of the day, still wet to the skin, but radiant with simple delight.

The little foundling had just come out of a hot foot-bath, which steamed in front of the fire, and was lying, mother naked, and warm as a toast, crowing and stretching in the lap, like a bird in the nest.

Now, Antony was a modest man, and had bashfully turned his back.

"O, look, Antony?" cried the dame "Isn't she pretty?"

Antony peeped round bashfully, and fidgeted with his feet. Had the child been a boy, he might have been more audacious; but as it belonged to the other sex, for which he had the most simple awe and veneration, he only peeped and blushed—that was all.

"A dear little girl!" continued Mrs. Parr, kissing her fondly.

"Look at that now!" murmured Antony, scratching his head and blushing all over.

Presently, however, when the babe was dressed, in warm flannels and a white night-dress of Martha's, he turned and inspected her delightedly; and surely a prettier darling, more bright and dimpled and kissworthy, never gladdened parents' eyes. When Antony put down his forefinger, she took it with her tiny dimpled fist, and held it tight, while his loving eyes ran over with delight.

"She knows you, Antony! She 'd be lying at the bottom of the sea if it hadn't been for you. Poor darling! I wonder if she hath father or mother—I doubt they must have perished in the ship!"

"Did you see any womanfolk aboard?" asked the master of the house.

Antony shook his head, and then, struck by a sudden thought, began opening his shirt and feeling in his breast. After searching for a moment, he drew forth a leathern belt, which he had worn tightly clasped about his middle.

"I found *that* in the cradle wid her!" he exclaimed. "By the same token, and by the feels of it, there 's gold in the belt; I hid it away from those thieves of the world. I think the poor crathur who died must have throw'd it there, wid his last gasp, before he was drowaded by the water."

He handed the belt to Parr, who at once saw that it was a kind of leathern purse, to be worn for concealment on the person. Undoing several small buckles, he came upon the contents, and speedily emptied them upon the table—one hundred pieces of English gold, and two bank notes for a hundred pounds each.

"Whew!" said Antony, with a prolonged whistle.

The belt discovered no clue to the owner, beyond the initials "R. M." wrought upon it in red silk; nor did it contain any kind of writing or printed memoranda. Nevertheless, it seemed sufficiently possible that the property belonged to the infant, her presumptive right to it being scarcely disputable.

The discovery of the property seemed to awaken the little ship-chandler to a consideration which had hitherto escaped him.

"And now that we have got the child," he said suddenly, "what is to be done with her?"

"Done wid her?" echoed Antony Reilly. "It 's the Lord's wish, and we'll *keep* her. I'm one of her fathers, you 're another, and the mistress will be a mother to her, plase God!"

So, after some little hesitation, it was settled: that if no one sent to claim her, or nothing was discovered of her kindred, she should be brought up with Martha, as a child of that humble house. The good dame was delighted with the arrangement, and covered the infant with loving kisses; while Antony Reilly swore, in his heart of hearts, that he would never forsake what God had committed to his care, under circumstances so strange and sad.

In this manner, the little maiden of the wreck was welcomed at Bartlepool, and took the name of Mabel Parr.

III.—ANTONY REILLY.

Antony Reilly was one of those Irish wanderers who are to be found scattered everywhere up and down the earth, and who never under any possible circumstances lose the outward signs of their nationality.

Though it was many a year since he had trod on Irish soil or been in Irish company, he was still to the manner born, as if he had just stepped out of his father's turf-cabin in Connemara. He was, at the time of the wreck, about thirty-five years of age; with a complexion like polished mahogany, bright blue eyes, and a mouth full of slyness and secret laughter. He turned up one day on the sea-shore, setting a long line on the sand for flounders. No one knew where he came from, or what he wanted; but he had built himself a sort of rough cabin among the sand-hills, and was soon to be seen early any morning at the door, smoking his pipe and looking quite at home. The water-side characters of the district, who never did any honest fishing, but looked upon the surrounding ocean as their divine prerogative, at first resented the presence of this good-humoured intruder; and it was not till he had quietly knocked a few of them on the head, and pleasantly intimated his willingness to fight any half dozen of them single-handed, that he was suffered to abide in peace.

After that, Antony came and went about the district in what would have been considered, had any person taken pains to consider it at all, a very mysterious manner. He was nominally a fisherman; but, though he had built a boat for himself, he seldom or never went fishing. A good part of his day was spent in bed; but at night he was abroad like a restless spirit. He knew by heart every corner of the sand-hills, and every creek of the coast. From time to time he was seen in the town, consorting with suspicious-looking nautical persons who were strangers to the place. Presently, it began to be whispered abroad that "the mad Irishman," as he was called, was nothing more nor less than a professional smuggler, concerned in the landing of valuable cargoes which never paid duty to the King. Be that as it may, he could generally lay his hand at very short notice on a nice piece of foreign silk (fit to be made into a lady's gown), or a bottle or two of good schiedam, or a few pounds of prime cigars and genuine tobacco. People said that he had mysterious hiding-places in the cliffs, where treasure of all kinds was secretly buried. The coastguards watched him, but never succeeded in catching him in any nefarious occupation. The waterside characters spied upon him, but utterly failed to detect the secret of his midnight doings. For all that, he seemed to thrive, and despite his vagabondish appearance, had always plenty of money at his disposal.

He had not been long in the place before he became very well known to Amos Parr, the ship-chandler, a worthy little man, for whose honesty and erudition he had a great respect. Ill-disposed persons said that Amos had an interest in more than one of the contraband cargoes which were "run" upon that coast, and that Antony was the medium of communication between himself and the smugglers. If that was the case, Amos was inconsistent, for he was never tired of rating Antony on his vagabond habits and mysterious comings and goings.

Thus he would say gravely, when Antony strolled in with some bright piece of silk, or a bottle of foreign wine as a present:—

"I wish I could be sure, Antony, that this was honestly come by!"

"Look at that now!" Antony would exclaim, with his beaming smile.

"Why don't you dress decently, take to some honest trade, and—ahem!—marry? What you want is a nice decent woman to look after you."

But Antony would never entertain the idea of matrimony. He loved his wild life, its freedom, and perhaps its dangers, far too well. It was his own opinion, frequently expressed, that he would never "die decently in his bed;" and indeed, judging from appearances, he was perfectly right.

But ever after the day when, to use his own expression, "he had become a father without the help of a wife," he became conscious of a new responsibility. Though he still continued his wild life, he was soberer and more steady, and gentler with all mankind. No one came to claim the child, and all inquiries as to her parentage were unavailing, though it was discovered that the ship was a West Indian, bound from Jamaica to the port of London. A few days after the shipwreck, a body was washed ashore, which Antony recognised as that of the gentleman he had seen in the ship's cabin, and Antony took care that he was decently buried, in a solid oak coffin, which the Irishman paid for out of his own pocket.

"Sure, now I'm a father, he 's a kind of kinsman of my own!" said Antony, when he and Amos followed as chief mourners.

As the little girl grew, the simple soul watched her in ever increasing delight. She was a beautiful creature, and anyone might see, as Antony said, that "she was a lady born." Not content with contributing largely to her maihtenance, as he insisted in doing, he insisted that she should have schooling; and a local worthy was found who, for a small sum, superintended her simple education. The little fortune he had found for her was untouched, and every penny of it was put, for her future use, into the bank of the neighbouring county town. So she grew and grew, loved tenderly by her two foster-fathers—"father Amos" and "father Antony," as she called them in her pretty prattling speech.

"She 's like a fairy child," Antony would say to himself. "Her hair 's like gold, and her eyes like the blue sky, and her voice like fairy music. I 'm afeared the angels will be taking her—she 's too purty to live."

The angels did not take her, but they came one night, when she was seven years old, to take away her foster-mother. So Amos was left alone with the two children and a little boy who had come three years before his wife's death in the old house by the sea; and in those days Antony was like a woman to the desolate man, and to the mourning children. He came and went on loving errands, and, thanks to him, the widower contrived to bear his load. But as years went on the little ship-chandler showed the signs of age and trouble, and comforted himself more with the case-bottle, which the smuggler always kept well supplied.

So the time wore on, till the date of the opening of our tale, when Mabel was a beautiful dreamy girl of eighteen, and Martha a strong, shapely lass of twenty-three.

Now it came to pass that Amos Parr had, in a moment of speculation, put nearly all his savings in a little schooner which traded—not without suspicion of occasional contraband doings—between that coast and France; and, eager to secure a competency for his foster-child, he had, with Antony's somewhat reluctant consent, invested in the same vessel the three hundred pounds which were Mabel's portion. The fact that he had done this, and that ill-luck might come of it, was a secret source of trouble to the little man—so that the case-bottle came more frequently than ever into requisition, and he himself showed daily more unmistakable signs of human infirmity.

Just as Christmas-tide approached he was, as we have seen, more than usually anxious, for nothing had been heard of the "Mary Jane" since she had sailed for France, months back, and he began to be afraid that mischief had come to her. To add to his perplexities, he had, in an evil moment, accepted a loan from one who never lent without an ulterior object—Squire Lambe of Lambe's Waste. If the schooner was lost he was practically ruined, for Antony Reilly, whose money was



DRAWN BY W. H. OVEREND. ENGRAVED BY W. J. PALMER.

"They saw the figure struggling on the slippery decks, now appearing, now disappearing; then it disappeared altogether. There was a long interval. At last they saw the man re-emerge, struggling towards the ship's side with something in his arms."—LOVE ME FOR EVER, page 3.



DRAWN BY F. MACNAB. ENGRAVED BY W. J. PALMER.

"From the moment of her lover's appearance Mabel Parr began to recover health and strength. Before many days had passed she had left her bed, and had walked out into the sun upon her lover's arm. Then, in that happy time, he told her everything that he had already told her friends."—LOVE ME FOR EVER, page 26.

also invested in a cargo of some kind, was not in a position to help him. Bitterly, therefore, did he reproach himself that he had been so speculative.

PART II.
THE FIRST CHRISTMAS EVE.

I.—ANTONY'S CHRISTMAS GIFTS.

It was rough weather that Christmas-tide.

Two nights before the arrival of the Holy Morning, Captain Seth Stapleton, of the schooner Betsy, a trading coaster of one hundred tons, came rushing in over the bar with only his foretop-sail and jib set, and was soon snugly berthed under shelter of the little quay. Thereupon Jack Parr, an imp of fifteen, who was apprenticed in a sort of formal way to the Captain, leaped ashore merrily, and ran up to tell his father and his sister Martha that the Betsy was in port.

He found the little family at supper, and burst in upon them in the uproarious manner peculiar to sea urchins. They welcomed him gladly, for it was his first voyage, and they were glad to see him safe on dry land. He kissed Martha boisterously and Mabel bashfully, and affectionately saluted his father.

The meeting was scarcely over when Captain Seth himself rolled in, for to say he walked would be to do little justice to a kind of motion only to be acquired by constant lurching about on the decks of a small vessel. He was a young man under thirty, but so gnarled and weather-beaten, so rough and hairy, and so swathed up in rough nautical raiment, that he might have been taken for any age under fifty. His right eye was invariably half closed, with the constant habit of looking to windward, and his voice was hoarse and far away, like a voice faintly heard in a gale.

For all that, he was the best of fellows; and Martha Parr, to whom he was engaged, was quite satisfied with his merits.

"What cheer, father?" asked the Captain, when he had folded Martha to his ample waistcoat, kissed her, and shaken hands all round. "Any news of the Mary Jane?"

He spoke as if hailing from a distance, and, though Amos stood directly facing him, put his hand to his ear as if to catch the reply.

The little chandler only shook his head.

"O, Captain Seth," cried Martha; "I'm afraid she's lost!"

"Don 't you go and make no manner o' mistake, Martha," replied the Captain, noticing Amos's crestfallen but almost imploring look. "Captain Mark Jones is aboard, and Billy Horncastle is his mate, and there aint two better seamen atween here and Tynemouth. No, no; she's none lost. Maybe she 's somewhat on the Dutch coast, biding her time for a run home."

As he spoke, the wind roared at the casement, and the old house shook to its foundations.

"Hark to that, father!" he added cheerily. "Captain Mark aint likely to lift anchor in such weather."

"How 's Jack been behaving?" asked Martha, anxious to change the doleful subject.

"Mid iling, middling," said the Captain.

The boy snapped his fingers and laughed gaily.

"Don't you bekeve him?" he cried. "I'm getting on splendid. I can smoke like a funnel, drink like a fish, and ben the Barber is teaching me to chew."

The Captain surveyed him from afar off with his weather eye, and growled good-humouredly,

"Why, you young lubber, you've been a-groaning on your back in my cabin nigh all the voyage. I thought we should ha' to chuck him overboard, I did indeed; but there, it takes more than one spell to make a sailor."

All at once, Mabel, who had been sitting quietly at the table, with her dreamy eyes fixed on the fire, rose to her feet with a joyful cry.

"What 's the matter, Mabel?" asked her foster-sister.

"Hark, don't you hear!"

As she spoke, they heard distinctly, above the roar of the wind, the sound of a voice singing. It came nearer and nearer, till it seemed to cease just outside of the house.

"That 's Antony Reilly's voice," cried Captain Seth; and he added more loudly, as if hailing, "Antony Reilly, ahoy!"

Martha ran to the door, and peeped out into the darkness, but saw nothing. Then they heard, from just under the antique casement opening on the little yard, or garden, a clear voice carolling the following words:—

O, I was born in Connemara,
One day at home when my mother was out!

Then the song ceased, and a clear voice cried,—"Open the windy!"

Mabel had already run close to the casement, laughing and listening. With a joyful cry, she now threw open the casement, which opened like a door, French fashion, almost to the ground. The wind shrieked, and the snow swept in; and at the same moment a burly figure, wrapt in a frieze great-coat and covered with snow, leapt into the room. On his head he wore a hairy cap, with lappets drawn down over his ears, on his legs long sea-boots; but his hands were bare, and under his right arm he carried a small keg.

"Father Antony!" cried Mabel, clapping her hands with delight.

Antony nodded, and beamed greeting to the friendly faces shining all round. Then, with Mabel's assistance, he took off his snow-covered great-coat, and hung it up it on a nail in the window gable, and, untying the strings of his hairy cap, threw it down on the window-seat, revealing to full view a bright, weather-beaten, clean-shaven face, closely-cut hair, as white as snow, and eyes that twinkled with health and good-humour.

"But why did you come that way?" asked Mabel, laughing.

Antony, who was growing more garrulous as years advanced, at once replied, in a voice clear as a bell, and full of music,

"Did ye ever know Antony Reilly come in by the door, like an honest man? My life 's a saycret, and my comings and goings is a saycret; and I love a windy better than a door, and a chimbley better than either. Are ye there, Captain Seth? I'm telling Mabel I'm a rogue bred and born. There 's nothing dacent about me, barring my name; and *that 's* not my own—it belongs to my father!"

So speaking, he advanced into the cheerful light of the fire, and saluted his friends seriatim.

"Always abusing yourself, Antony!" observed the ship-chandler, quietly.

Antony threw up his head and laughed like a boy.

"That 's my cunning! It 's to give other people the cue to praise me." He added, reflectively, brushing the flakes of snow out of his rosy neck, "Sorra little there ever was in *me* to praise. I 'm a dirty low thief of a smuggler, and I never in all my life did a good deed—but onst!"

So saying, he took a chair, and sat rubbing his hands together merrily, with a thorough enjoyment of his own wickedness.

"When was *that*, father Antony?" asked Mabel, coming close beside his chair, nestling to his side, and smiling down at him.

"When I snatched your own sweet self from the say, mavourneen!" he replied, beaming up at her. "I thought it was a say fairy ye were thin, sleeping so tranquil wid your little fist in your rosebud of a mouth, and now you 're a full-grown colleen, and as good as you 're big, they 're telling me!—Look at that now!"

The girl slipped her little hand down, and he held it softly between his own, while he looked over at Captain Seth, who had also seated himself, with Martha by his side, and inquired, nodding amicably—

"And how 's the Captain, these times?"

The Captain replied that he was never better, apart from a slight touch of the lumbago, somewhere in the region covered by the back of his enormous pea-jacket.

Antony then glanced thoughtfully at the master of the house, and asked in a lower key—

"Any news, Amos?"

"No news," replied Amos, dolefully. "I 'm afraid the ship 's lost, and if so, God help us all!"

There was an ominous silence, and a gloom fell upon all the faces present; but Antony, after heaving a heavy sigh, with his eyes fixed on the sad countenance of his old friend, was the first to shake off the shadow. To effect a diversion, he gently released Mabel's hand, and rose to his feet.

"Never say die till you 're stretched out and being waked to glory. Where will I lave the keg; I 'm afraid of the gaugers!"

"In the old place," replied the ship-chandler, rising too.

Then Amos took a candle from the table, and searching the paved floor found a movable stone, which he displaced, revealing a sort of hole in the ground. Into this hole Antony dropped the keg, but not before he had opened the bung and replenished the case-bottle on the table, filling the apartment with the perfume of choice schiedam, many degrees above proof. Then the stone was set carefully in its place.

But Antony, who never came empty-handed, had not yet done. Running over to his great-coat, he felt in his pockets, and came back with both hands loaded.

"Look, Martha, darlint, I've brought ye some new silk ribbons, forbye some prime cigars for the man that 's going to own ye. Try them, Captain—they 're telling me they 're swate smoking, though myself I prefer the pipe."

Martha took her ribbons, and the Captain at once lighted one of the cigars, a perfect Havannah, by the rush candle. Then Antony, going to his coat again, and holding his hands behind him, looked merrily at Mabel.

"What d'ye think I've brought *you*, darlint? Ye'll never guess!"

She gave up the attempt at once, and Antony, with much importance, produced a small paper parcel; this he undid triumphantly, and after unfolding and throwing away several of its wrappers, revealed a dingy brochure, quarto-shaped, printed in black letter, and bearing all the signs of age.

"Sure I knew you loved a bit o' print better than anything in the world, and I got this from an ould coastguardsman in exchange for a drop of my own importing."

With a cry of pleasure, Mabel took the tome, and opened it at the titlepage, which read as follows, in quaint old-fashioned clumsy black type:—

Ye True and Strange Storie
of Mynherr Vanderdecken,
called ye Flyinge Dutchemanne,
and of his doomed Barque,
called ye Fantome Shippe.

English'd out of ye Dutch, and printed
by Roger Yorke, at ye Signe of ye Blacke Cocke,
Lichfielde, 1615.

With gleaming eyes, the maiden first read the words herself, and then murmured them aloud, to the evident consternation of Antony himself.

"Look at that now!" he exclaimed, lugubriously. "Is *that* in it, mavourneen? If I'd known, I'd never have brung it."

"Why not, father Antony?" asked Mabel, eagerly, turning over the leaves.

"Because it 's not for young colleens to read about Dutchmen and the Divil. Bad luck to him that gave it me! I could him I couldn't read nor write, and he said it was poetry stuff, quite convanient for a colleen to read."

"And there *is* poetry, too, Father Antony," replied Mabel, who had in the meantime discovered at the end of the prose narrative some black-letter verses, entitled "Ye Sad Ballade of Ye Flying Dutchemanne."

"Listen!" she added, and read in a low but clear voice the following verse, which we print in more orthodox English:—

"For ever and for ever more,
His soul must range the deep,
Till woman's faith and woman's love
Shall bring his spirit sleep."

Curiously enough, the reading of the verse seemed to make not only Antony Reilly, but Captain Seth, exceedingly uncomfortable. "Avast!" groaned the latter, fidgeting uncomfortably in his chair; while Antony held out his hand and tried to take the book back.

"Give it back to me, darlint! It 's fairy work, I 'm thinking!"

But Mabel was not at all disposed to part with her prize; and at last, laughing merrily, she ran with it up the oaken staircase to the rooms above. Antony shook his head dismally, and Captain Seth uttered another groan.

"What 's the matter?" said Martha, rather astonished.

The Captain did not reply, but looked compassionately at Amos Parr. The fact was, he had a sailor's superstitious horror of the very mention of the famous Dutch Ship, and thought it might have some mysterious bearing on the fate of the missing Mary Jane. He had something else on his mind, as will soon be seen.

"Never mind, Mabel," said Amos Parr; "the book will do *her* no harm. But you spoil her, Antony! She 's too fond of poetry and superstitious folly already. Dreaming! always dreaming! It drives all the roses out of her cheeks. I 'll be bound she 's locked up in her room, devouring the rubbish already."

Antony was about to reply, when all eyes were directed on Captain Seth. He was struggling in his chair apoplectically, and giving vent to extraordinary sounds, as of something working within him. At last he rose to his feet, and hailed the company.

"Mates, list' to me!" he said, with a gasp.

They all looked at him in wonder.

"I didn't ought to mention it p'raps," he continued, "but it 's on my mind. Last night, I seen something, out theer!"

And he swept his hairy hand in the direction of the sea.

"Well, well, what did you see?" asked Amos, smiling and shrugging his thin shoulders.

"The Flying Dutchman itself, or I 'm no sailor. I were at the helm, mates! Suddenly I see her, scudding under full sail when my boat was lying to under double-reefed topsail and storm-jib. Mates, I thought we was lost, but a few hours afterwards we sighted Allery Lights, passed the Beacon, and came over the bar safe and sound."

Antony gave vent to a prolonged whistle, and Martha looked a little distressed. But Jack Parr laughed, and Amos Parr, with twinkling eye, patted the giant on the shoulder, and said:

"Come, come, Captain, tell that tale to the marines!"

But the Captain was too lost in his cogitations to resent this scepticism.

"Mates," he continued, "I ought to be a drownded man by rights, yet here I be; and what puzzles me is this heer—that ship ought to be seen off Cape Horn, yet theer she was in the Channel, not thirty mile from the Dutch Coast."

Amos laughed again, and poured himself out a glass of spirits.

"A sailor's fancy," he said; "some passing ship!"

This time Captain Seth turned his weather eye on the speaker, and surveyed him steadily from head to foot. Then he returned solemnly:—

"No ship of that cut sails the sea but one, and that ship 's sailed by no living man!"

Antony Reilly made no remark, but was plainly puzzled by his own thoughts. A gloom fell over the company, which was not entirely dissipated when Antony and the Captain said good-by for the night.

II.—THE LEGEND.

Meantime, Mabel, safely locked in her own room, a tiny chamber close to the roof, and with a little window looking out to sea, was seated on her bed, a rush candle on the pillow at her side, and deep in the perusal of the strange old chronicle. As she read, her eyes widened in wonder, and her colour came and went, and presently her tears began to fall.

Part of the strange old legend is, doubtless, familiar to our readers; certain details, however, are to be found only in the authentic chronicle she was reading.

It told how a certain Dutch captain, by name Philip Vanderdecken, descendants of whom were even then living in Amsterdam, had offended both man and God by his wicked life, his want of Christian religion, and his piracies on the high seas; how he went from bad to worse, and never took God's name save in vain; how at last, one winter night, when attempting to round Cape Horn, he had sworn with frightful oaths that he would either succeed in his attempt or never cease sailing until the Judgment Day; and how, even then, the direful doom had been cast upon him, that he should, indeed, sail the stormy seas for ever—that is, till the Lord Christ cometh to judge the quick and dead. As it was doomed, so it was fulfilled. Instead of dying blessedly like other men, the doomed Captain lived on, carrying tempest and devastation wherever he sailed; never resting, never sleeping, ever struggling and blaspheming, amidst the pitiless elements which sought in vain to destroy him. Again and again he tried to die, but could not—nor could any of his wicked crew. That was his doom; that he should never sleep, nor rest, nor find a pillow in the grave, until his sin was atoned. A thousand times he cried in his despair for Death to come to him; but his prayer, being impenitent, was never answered. The lightning struck and spared him, the wind and the sea smote, but did not harm him; he raved, blasphemed, and ever when Death passed by clutched at his chilly robe without avail. So he lived on, bringing terror and fatality to all who caught a glimpse of his doomed vessel.

This was the first part of the chronicle; but there was a second, even more pitiful—as the maiden's ready tears betokened.

It came to pass after many years that Christ the Son, the All Merciful and All Loving, in his supreme pity for the most undeserving of his human brethren, so interceded with God the Father that He released the Flying Dutchman from a certain issue of his despair; insomuch as He promised to let his own dark Angel of Death take the man and give him sleep, if ever he should discover a living woman willing to *share* his sorrows and his doom. For this purpose, and with a view to his spiritual regeneration, he was suffered once every seven years to come to land and to seek for sympathy and pity—most of all, for *love*. And he had ranged every land of the broad earth on this weary quest. None knew him as the accurst of God, and he had, by God's will, command of whatever treasure he chose; so that he sometimes appeared in splendid raiment as a powerful prince, and sometimes as a poor and wandering student, and sometimes as a sailor fresh from over sea. Then many women loved him—some for his gold, others for his face (which was beautiful as that of an angel), and others for his mystery and power; but none loved him truly, and most turned from him, before he could even discover his secret and say, "Will you give your soul alive to me, for Love's sake?" The chronicle told of how he wooed a beautiful Princess of the Inds, who betrayed and would have slain him; and a passionate lady of Italy, who was false to him; and a simple shepherdess of the Alps, who, calling upon Christ to save her from him and from sin, to which he had driven her, did die in his despairing arms; and of many others, all of whom were fearful, or unworthy, or unfaithful, when the hour of trial came. And ever, at the lapse of every earthly visitation(which lasted, once every seven years, for the space of the moon's four quarters) he returned to the seas, blaspheming anew against God and hating all woman-kind. There, alas! (said the chronicle) he saileth to this day, in infinite despair; nor doth any man think that ever woman will be found faithful enough in Love to sacrifice herself so utterly for a creature under God's ban. Nor, if such a woman be found, will her task be easy; for having parted with him on earth at the wane of the moon, she must sail to seek him on the great ocean, and when his ship is found, she must row to it in a frail boat, and leap upon the deck alone, and call upon her lover thrice in the name of Christ the Lord. Then, and then only, the doom would be uplifted; but, alas! uplifted it will never be, since there is no woman born of a woman that is so devoted, or so desperate, as to face so terrible a fate.

Mabel read and read, while her tears fell, and the infinite pity of the tale filled her gentle soul. When she had read it once, she read it again. It seemed so real, so pitiful! It did not seem possible that it was merely a fancy and a dream.

For Mabel was a child, on the threshold of womanhood, and her spirit was full of superstition and sweet romance. She saw the Lonely Man before her eyes, even as he was pictured in the chronicle: a pale man of singular beauty, tall and graceful exceedingly, with raven hair, a face like alabaster, and eyes as bright as precious stones; with thin rings of gold in his ears, and singular jewels glittering on his hands, which were described as delicate and white as snow. What maiden would not have fallen in love with such a picture, as Mabel did? What maiden would not have dreamed, as Mabel did, that it would be easy to live or die for such a lover?

That night, before she fell to sleep, she prayed for the Flying Dutchman, and for all men who were beautiful and sorrowful like *him;* and she prayed, moreover, that God might some

day bring such a sufferer to *her*, that she might show there was at least one true maiden in the world! Even when her eyes closed, her thoughts were full of the new vision. She saw the Lonely Ship upon the sea, she heard the crying of the tempest, she caught glimpses of a beautiful phantom figure that trod the deck, companionless and alone; and her heart yearned out to him in infinite love and pity, and she thirsted to go to him through the tempest, and to die with him if need be, since nothing could be sweeter or blesseder than so to die!

Poor child! It was the first awakening of Love within her soul. Who shall smile at her simple thoughts and prayers? Such prayers and thoughts fly forth as doves on the troubled waters of human life; they shall abide imperishable, when all this cloudy fabric of the sense has passed away; and, thanks to them, and to the spirit of Love which inspires them, many a storm-tossed Soul shall be saved indeed!

III.—ROUND THE CHRISTMAS FIRE.

On the afternoon before Christmas Eve, Amos Parr had an unpleasant surprise.

Squire Lambe came swaggering to the house in company with Caleb Thatch, a miserable little creature with the moral outlook of a ferret, to which unpleasant animal his white eye-lashes and bloodshot eyes gave him no little resemblance. He was a sort of pettifogging practitioner in the town, and he knew a little of the law; but he was not a qualified attorney, and he had fallen on evil days.

He came in at the heels of the Squire, and was summarily introduced.

"This is Caleb Thatch. I have asked him to make an inventory of the contents of this house."

Amos, who was seated in the great kitchen busy with his pocket-book (he was trying, in fact, by a series of fanciful calculations, to see a way out of his financial troubles), looked up in amazement.

"Surely, Sir, you are only jesting," he cried, trembling violently. "Besides, it is against the law."

"Law or no law, I wish it. If you decline to humour me, I shall know how to bring you to your senses"

"But why do you wish to leave this man here?"

"Because I do not trust you, Amos Parr."

"I will pay you! I will pay you!"

"Of course, when the ship returns!" returned Lambe, with a sneering laugh. "I am likely to wait till then—eh, Caleb?"

Caleb, who was completely under his employer's thumb, gave a servile titter, rubbing his hands.

Amos looked round nervously; for he was alone in the kitchen, and he dreaded lest any of his household should overhear.

"To-morrow is our Lord's Birthday; to-night is Christmas Eve. Spare me, Sir, till the holy season is done."

"No!"

"I am an honest man, and never yet failed to keep my bond Give me a little time."

Squire Lambe struck the table with his riding-whip, and uttered a coarse oath.

"Keep that cant for one who does not know you. You are in league with that Irish scoundrel, Antony Reilly, to rob the King of his lawful dues 'Honest,' quotha!—Caleb, out with your inventory, and put all down?"

As he spoke, a sunbeam came into the old room, in the shape of Mabel, fresh and bright from wandering by the sea. She wore a country hat, with ribbons, and a pretty cloak; and in her hands she carried the precious book which Antony had given her.

The moment his eyes fell upon her, the Squire took off his hat and made her a mock bow.

"Fair Mistress Mabel, may I kiss your hand?" he cried, with coarse gallantry; and as he suited the action to the word, he looked up at her with fierce, bold eyes, and whispered, "You see, I bear no malice, pretty one!"

She turned away coldly, and looked inquiringly at her foster-father. Meantime, Caleb Thatch, book in hand, was moving about the chamber and busily taking notes.

"Father, hath anything happened?"

"Nothing, child," answered the ship-chandler, with an imploring look at his tormentor.

"I but ask your father, as you call him, to pay me my lawful due," exclaimed the Squire, "and he refuses. Come, *you* can pay me if you will!"

"I?" said Mabel.

"I have bidden fairly, and my offer still holds. Come, Amos Parr, which shall it be—the money or the maiden? You see I am easily content."

Amos Parr did not reply—he was too fearful of giving fresh offence. Mabel, now understanding too well how matters stood, looked at the Squire in ever-deepening dislike. Yet many young maids would have thought him a prize worth catching. He was resplendently dressed, in a yellow coat with ruffles and lappets, with crimson breeches, and silk stockings under his riding-boots. He wore his sword on his thigh, fastened by a silken sash. His bold face was not ill-looking, though a little discoloured by strong passions and dissipation, and he wore, on that occasion, an elegant peruke, surmounted with a crimson hat and feathers. In fact, he was going that night to dine with some boon companions at a neighbouring manor, and had donned his best.

The maiden missed no portion of his splendour, eying him with soft, steadfast eyes from head to foot, and, I fear, the Squire, who had no small opinion of himself, took the look for one of admiration. In truth, however, she was comparing this coarse reality with the new ideal of her dreams; with the beautiful and sad-eyed sufferer whom God had cast out, and who could find no woman to love him truly and redeem him.

"Come," cried the Squire, "this is the merry season, and at a word from you it may be merry indeed."

And thereupon he took her round the waist, and would have given her a smacking kiss. She disengaged herself with an angry cry, and turned upon him with an expression of dislike which was now unmistakable.

"Pray go, Sir!" cried Amos, losing his self-control. "This house is not yours, and you shall not insult my child."

"Very well," answered the Squire, with a threatening nod. "You refuse. Remember, 'tis the second time of asking!"

"I do refuse," answered the little man, taking Mabel's hand and assuming a certain feeble dignity.

The Squire put on his hat, with a fierce cock to one side, and strode to the door. Turning on the threshold, he made a sign to Caleb to continue in possession, and with a savage scowl at Amos, and a mocking kiss of the hand to Mabel, he left the house, making his way through the snow, which lay white and thick upon the ground, towards the inn where he had left his horse.

The first impulse of Amos, on the Squire's departure, was to turn angrily upon Caleb, and bid him follow his master; for his presence was an outrage, and he had no right whatever there. But bethinking himself of the violent character of the man with whom he had to deal, and reflecting that, after all, he had nothing to conceal, he sighed heavily, and, still holding Mabel's hand, went slowly up stairs. On the upper storey of the house there was a small room, furnished only with a wooden chair and table, and with several old ledgers and piles of invoices strewn upon the floor. There Amos often sat and did his accounts; and thither he now went and sat down sadly, leaning his cheek upon his hand.

The sun was setting over the ocean, and the crimson light streamed in through the diamond panes of the window. The sea was just ruffled by the last dark breath of the dying gale, and heaving laboriously, in great sad waves that did not break. The quiet square, the surrounding houses, the old warehouses, and the sharves down to the very edge of the water, were covered with snow, no longer pure white, but softly reddened by the sunset. All was very sad, still, and solemn, as if expectant of the Christmas Vision that was to come so soon.

Kneeling by the side of her foster-father, resting her arms upon his knees, Mabel looked upon into his face. She did not speak—her heart was too full of fondness and sweet pity. The light flooded the two silent figures, but grew gradually dimmer and dimmer.

"God bless thee, Mabel!" said the little man at last, softly smoothing her golden hair with his wrinkled hand. "My own child doth not love me better!"

"And am I not the same as your own child, father Amos?"

"In one sense, yes. God sent thee to me, I am sure of that. But, alas! it is for you I grieve. If I have in my folly cast away what was thine, not mine, how shall I forgive myself?"

"Nay, it was not mine, but yours," she cried tenderly. "Do I not owe you that and a thousand times more? Do not fret about the money if it be lost, I care not."

"



THE SQUIRE'S PEW



"Some of the neighbours, perchance," said Amos, "come to give us their kind greetings."

At a sign from her father, Martha left the room.

"If it's Caleb Thatch come back," Antony cried after her, "cast me, and *I'll* give him his Christmas furing!"

A minute passed. They heard the outer door open, and the sound of voices. Then Martha reappeared, showing in a tall man, whose face was hidden by his slouch hat, and who wore a heavy travelling cloak, white with the snow which had again began to fall.

IV.—"PHILIP VANDERDECKEN."

The moment the stranger entered, he addressed Amos Parr, in a deep musical voice, with a strong foreign accent.

"Pardon me if I intrude upon your privacy. Do not disturb yourselves, I pray."

So saying, he threw back his cloak, and took off his snow-covered hat. The firelight flashed upon his features, and showed them distinctly to all there. His complexion was swarthy, yet clear and singularly pale, his hair black as jet and worn somewhat long, his features handsome in the extreme yet darkened by an habitual frown, his eyes singularly penetrating and almost fierce. He wore a black moustache and a short beard, cropped close, sailor fashion; and fixed in his ears were two small rings of gold.

All looked at him in amazement, Mabel in positive awe and terror, for he seemed the very original of that old Legend! Her eyes dilated, her colour went and came, she could scarcely refrain from uttering a cry; but none noticed her—all eyes being fixed on the intruder.

Captain Seth was the first to break the silence.

"Who are you? and what d'ye want?"

The stranger glanced at him calmly with his black eyes, and then, without replying to him, again addressed the master of the house.

"I am a traveller just landed from Holland, and I lost my way amidst the snow. I was looking for an inn, when I beheld your windows brightly lit, and thought I would ask for shelter."

Amos Parr, who was the very soul of hospitality and kindliness, was annoyed at the rough salutation which had greeted the stranger's entrance; so lifting his finger warningly to Captain Seth, who seemed unaccountably sullen and irritable, he said with a bow:

"You are right welcome, whoever you are, Sir."

The stranger nodded, and without more apology threw off his cloak, a heavy article of attire, of somewhat old-fashioned cut. His graceful yet powerful figure now showed to greater advantage in a tight-fitting suit of dark brown, with black velvet lappets and cuffs. His collar was open at the throat showing a rough sailor's shirt, and he wore leather boots reaching to the knee. His hands were covered with gauntlet-gloves.

"May I sit by your fire a little?" he said; and, without waiting for a reply, he walked over and sat down. The little party drew back, watching him in surprise, and, if the truth must be told, with a certain dread; for there was much about the circumstances of his appearance calculated to awaken superstition. Captain Seth and Antony nudged each other; Martha shrank back under her lover's huge shadow; while Amos stood smiling awkwardly; and Mabel, standing alone on one side of the hearth, looked at the stranger in positive fascination.

He kicked the snow off his boots against the hearthstone, and then, leisurely drawing off his gloves, began warming his hands. Mabel then perceived, with a fresh thrill, that his hands were unusually white, and covered with valuable rings.

"Won't you sit down?" he said to his host, with a patronising nod. His manner, we may remark in passing, was aggressive, and not too amiable; and he had the air of one accustomed to be obeyed.

Amos smiled again, and took his old seat.

"I'm afraid I disturb you," said the guest, with a slight shrug of the shoulders.

"Not at all," replied the ship-chandler; "but the fact is, and I'm afraid you will laugh at us when I tell you why your appearance took us by surprise. You say you came from Holland, Sir, and, curiously enough, just before you knocked, we were discussing a foolish superstition of your countrymen concerning a certain ghostly Mariner, who comes to land once every seventh Christmas-tide"——

"Ah! the Flying Dutchman!" cried the stranger, with a careless nod, and the ghost of a low laugh. "I know the story. He comes to earth in the hope of finding some human soul who may—the Devil alone knows how!—relieve him from his burden. Well, I confess the coincidence of my arrival is a curious one; but I trust you will give me the benefit of the doubt, and not refuse me your company because an unfortunate countryman of mine is recorded in the black calendar of your superstitions."

Amos was about to answer cordially, when Mabel, her eyes still fixed on the stranger's face, cried eagerly:

"No, no! You will stay here you will"——

She paused with a deep sigh, and drew back into the shadow. The stranger looked at her coldly, though with a certain surprise, and then said, turning carelessly to Amos:

"Your daughter, Sir?"

"By adoption."

"And mine, too," muttered Antony, "if finding's keeping."

"I'm afraid my arrival has startled the young lady. Mark how pale she is."

"Nay," returned Mabel quickly, now blushing scarlet, "it is not with *fear*."

The young man gazed at her steadily again, with a gaze that no one could have deemed too modest; and then, as if tired of the scrutiny, turned again to the fire, observing:

"Sensibly spoken."

"Will you drink with us, Sir?" said Amos. "See, here is wine—and some stronger liquor of your own nationality."

"Thanks. I'll take a cup of wine, with your leave."

Amos poured out a full goblet of red claret, and was about to lift it and hand it to his guest, when Mabel stepped forward and quietly undertook the office of cup-bearer. As he took the wine from her delicate hand, he looked at her again with the same audacious gaze, so that she blushed more deeply, and drooped her eyes. Then he held the cup up to the light.

"Not bad wine, I fancy!"

"'Twas a present from my friend here," replied Amos, smiling, and pointing to Antony.

"Humph! too good, I should fancy, ever to have paid duty to the King!" He continued, observing Antony's look of consternation, "Never mind! I'm no Custom House officer."

"May I ask your name, Sir?" said Amos timidly.

The stranger hesitated, still in the act to drink; then a curious smile flitted across his face.

"Philip Vanderdecken," he replied.

The very name of the ghastly Captain! All started, and looked nervously at each other. He continued, still smiling grimly:

"The fact is, I am a descendant of *his;* at any rate, I bear his name, not an uncommon one over there. Well," he cried, "here's the poor devil's health, and luck to his search when he comes ashore"

And he lifted the goblet to his lips and drank. Presently he added, looking thoughtfully at the fire:

"After all, it's a hopeless business, and my spectral relative might as well give up the hunt in despair. Where anything depends upon a *woman*, farewell to hope and constancy!"

"Why upon a woman, Sir?" asked Amos, who was but dimly instructed in the legend.

"As far as I recollect, 'tis through a woman my unfortunate namesake is to be saved—a woman who is so true, so pure, that she is willing to give her life, her very soul, for his. So the thing is, on the very surface, a ghastly jest! A true woman! a constant woman! a woman who is not more changeable than a weathercock, lighter than a straw! There is no such thing!"

"You are severe on the fair sex, good Sir," observed Amos Parr.

"I've sailed the wide world round," was the reply, "and found them ever the same. Fair face, false heart—sweet in seeming, treacherous in truth—such have been the charmers, from Lilith and Eve downwards."

He sat for a moment looking at the fire, and the frown darkened on his face. To the surprise of all present, Mabel looked at him steadfastly and said:

"You speak very bitterly, Sir. Have you good cause?"

He started, and raised his eyes to hers. His gaze was bold as ever, but this time she did not flinch or blush.

"And if I have?" he said, after a prolonged look.

"And you deem *all* women false and wicked?"

"Nay, fair company ever excepted," he returned, with a kind of sneering courtesy. "She in whose presence we sit and quaff, is an angel ever. All the rest of her sex,—what I have said!"

He appeared to think that he had disposed of the subject; but, after a moment's pause, Mabel said, less as if addressing him than as if communing with herself:

"And yet it seems so *easy* to be true. 'Tis hard to be wise, beautiful, and noble, like some women; but surely any maid can be *true*, if she wills!"

A little more interested, the young man gazed at her again.

"She must first *love*, my pretty maiden. Is *that* so easy?"

This time Mabel did not reply; but turning her eyes away, she sighed deeply and seemed to become lost in thought.

Before anything further could be said or done by those present, an unexpected incident occurred. Suddenly, to the astonishment of all, a loud and angry voice exclaimed:

"So! Amos Parr! you have company, I see!"

V.—THE BLESSING.

Leaning against the lintel of the door, and regarding the company with fierce bloodshot eyes, was Squire Lambe, who, finding the outer door unbolted after Martha's admission of the stranger, had stridden in unobserved.

It was obvious that he had been engaged in high revel; the ruffles round his throat were torn and stained with wine, his gorgeous dress was disordered, and he stood very unsteadily upon his feet. Clutching his riding-whip, he rocked to and fro, and rolled his head very viciously. Just behind him, in the shadow of the kitchen, stood Caleb Thatch, his familiar.

"Your troubles sit lightly upon you," continued the Squire with a slight hiccough, "that you can keep wassail with your rascally companions. Answer me, Amos Parr! How dared you turn Caleb Thatch from your door?"

And he shook his whip threateningly.

"Musha, thin, that was *my* doing," cried Antony Reilly; "and I'd serve his master the same, if he wasn't civil—look at that now!"

"You dog, I know you!" said Lambe, with a face of thunder; then, turning again to Amos he continued, "I was passing by and saw the lights—hic—and heard the voices. It is like you—you, a pauper—to waste your substance in riot, and refuse to pay your debts!"

"Nay, Sir," returned Amos, gently, "'tis Christmas Eve."

"Christmas or no Christmas, have you got that money?"

"Alas, no, Sir!"

"And yet you can entertain all the rascals of the neighbourhood. You knave! why have you not borrowed it?"

"You jest, Sir. Who would lend me such a sum?"

"That is your affair, not mine. Amos Parr, so sure as the snow falls to-night I will not spare you another day."

As he spoke, Lambe had advanced into the centre of the chamber, glaring balefully at his victim: while Caleb Thatch, encouraged by his employer's violence, had taken courage, and stood smiling maliciously in the door. All seemed completely taken aback by the sudden onslaught. Martha clung to Captain Seth, who gasped apoplectically; and even Antony Reilly looked bewildered.

As for the poor ship-chandler, all the colour had gone out of his cheeks, and he looked the picture of misery and shame; and when Mabel ran over to him and softly pressed his hand, he scarcely lifted his eyes to hers.

"You are a wicked man!" she cried, looking indignantly at Lambe. "God will punish you for your hard heart!"

Lambe laughed loudly.

"Do you hear that, Caleb?" he cried. Then he added significantly, "Remember, Mistress Mabel, a word from you might make me gentle even now!"

"She will not speak it," said Amos, recovering himself and speaking with a certain dignity. "Mabel, my child, do not heed him."

"I do *not* heed him," cried the girl, while her tears fell on his trembling hand. "God will protect you against him, father Amos."

Captain Seth leant over towards his old friend, and hailed him faintly from a distance.

"Father! *can't* you pay him?"

Amos only shook his head.

"As far as twenty pieces will go, Squire," continued Captain Seth, "I'll help the old man. Come, don't be hard, mate. This be Christmas-tide."

Lambe turned on his heel, and deigned no reply to the proposal.

"You know me, Amos Parr. I shall keep my word. Sleep on it—and pleasant dreams."

And he strode towards the door.

All this time the stranger had remained quiescent in his chair, with his eyes fixed on the fire, seemingly quite indifferent to what was going forward. But at Lambe's last words, he rose suddenly.

"Stay!" he said authoritatively. "What debt is this? How much?"

The Squire turned, and looked him contemptuously from head to foot

"How much? I might rather ask, who are you that ask?—Pshaw, a trifle to many, but a fortune to beggar rogues, such as you and he! One hundred golden pounds, eh Caleb?"

"One hundred pounds—yes!" cried Caleb from the door.

The stranger, frowning darkly, turned his dark eyes on Amos.

"Can you not pay this paltry sum?"

"In sooth, no," was the reply, "though I shall do so if he will give me time. I am part owner of a small vessel plying between this port and France—all my little fortune is in her—she hath been missing for weeks—we fear lest she be lost."

"Her name, prithee?"

"The Mary Jane o. Bartlepool."

"Schooner or brig?"

Captain Seth took upon himself to reply:

"Brig. Hunnerd and fifty ton."

Vanderdecken seemed to reflect for a moment; then he said quietly:

"I think I can set your mind at rest. That vessel is safe in the port of Rotterdam, and will doubtless return here before many days."

"Sir, is it possible?" cried Amos, trembling with delight.

But Squire Lambe, who had been listening impatiently to the foregoing scene, and watched the stranger with growing irritation, now struck the lintel with his whip and interfered savagely.

"What cock-and-bull story is this, you knaves? Do you think to cheat me out of my due, as you cheat his Majesty the King? I tell you the Mary Jane is lost!"

With flashing eyes, Vanderdecken advanced towards the furious Squire.

"And I tell *you*, man, that you lie!" he said in a commanding voice; and before the other could recover from his astonishment he added, "Enough—I will give you substantial proof of my faith in mine own tale. Write out a receipt for this debt in full!"

He drew from his breast a heavy silken purse, and, with the carelessness of one to whom money is utterly indifferent, emptied a portion of its contents upon the table. They were large English gold pieces, each the size of a modern half-crown.

"There is gold. Count out what is owing to you, and leave this house!"

"O Sir," cried Amos, utterly aghast, "I cannot suffer this—you are too generous!"

"Bah! 'tis nothing—you will repay me, perchance, when your ship returns."

Lambe was dumbfounded and savage, for he did not want to receive the money. He scowled blackly at the stranger.

"How know I that this gold is honestly come by?"

"That is no affair of yours. Count it, I say, and begone."

"Well, gold is gold, and I am content. Caleb, count the yellowboys and write the discharge!"

With eyes glittering full of avarice, Caleb approached the table, and obeyed. With trembling fingers he counted the pieces, lingering fondly over each, and handed them to Lambe, then he wrote the discharge on a leaf of his note-book, and handed it to the stranger, who looked at it, nodded, and threw it down on the table among the heap of gold still remaining.

"Is it fairy gold, think you?" whispered Antony to Captain Seth.

"Lord knows!" muttered the Captain.

Lambe still lingered, and Vanderdecken pointed to the door.

"Who, in hell's name, are you?" asked the Squire, between his set teeth.

"That concerns not you. Go! there is the door."

"This is our first meeting, but it will not be our last—nay, by——! As for you, Amos Parr, we shall talk together of this and other matters before long. Come, Caleb."

So he went, and it was as well he did go, for Antony Reilly, in a wild state of excitement, was making unmistakable preparation to assist his departure. The moment the door closed behind him and his familiar, Vanderdecken quietly resumed his chair, as if nothing particular had occurred.

Amos approached him, trembling with gratitude, and holding out his hands.

"O Sir, how shall I repay you? Your goodness puts me to shame; it does indeed."

The young man looked at him quietly, and shrugged his shoulders.

"It is nothing," he said, coldly. "If I had a whim to thwart a knave, prithee do not credit me with any particular sentiment in the matter. But it is late. Can I sleep under this roof to-night?"

"Most surely," returned Amos. "But ah! Sir, suffer me to thank you—suffer me"——

With an impatient frown, the other turned his face away.

"Oblige me by saying no more on that subject. What I did, I did, less for your sake, than to please mine own humour."

And he sat with averted head, gloomily gazing into the fire. Then Mabel, who had beheld the whole scene with tender wonder, approached him, and put her little hand upon his arm.

"Sir, do not speak so!" she said, and in the ring of her voice there was a sweet solemnity. "Whoever you are, you came this night as an angel of mercy to this poor house. Your own words wrong you, but your deeds are those of a good man. You have come to us on Christmas Eve, a time of peace and blessing. As you have blessed *us*, may God bless *you!*"

He looked up at her as if startled, and seemed to shiver under her touch; then, smiling coldly and incredulously, he drooped his eyes again. Was it fancy, or did she hear him murmur afterwards to himself, as he sat brooding there—

"Bless *me?* Never; never!"

But even then they heard the singing of the carollers outside in the wintry snow, and Martha, opening the window and letting the dim moonlight creep into the room, said softly:

"See father,—it is Christmas morn."

PART III.

THE STRANGE CAPTAIN.

I.—CHRISTMAS MORNING.

There were several spare rooms in the old tumbledown dwelling where Amos Parr had carried on his trade so many years, and in one of them the strange Captain (for they gathered from his conversation that he was a mariner by profession) was lodged for the night; Mabel and Martha making up with their own hands a bed of sweet-smelling linen, as white as snow.

When he had retired, they all sat whispering together over the fire, discussing the marvels of the night, Vanderdecken's mysterious appearance, his ominous name, and the great services he had done to his host. Antony Reilly and Captain Seth were strongly of opinion that he was something more than human—and not angelic; perhaps, if the truth were told, the Flying Dutchman himself, in whom they both religiously believed. But Amos Parr pooh-poohed the simple idea, and even expressed his opinion that it was not merely foolish, but ungrateful, to entertain it. All were agreed on one point—that the stranger, whoever he was, had acted very nobly.

Antony and the Captain went away, and the family retired to snatch a few hours of rest before Christmas Day began. On reaching her own chamber, Mabel, whose brain was all afire with excitement, took out the old book and eagerly read the

portion describing the personal appearance of its hero. Yes, she had not been mistaken! The words might have been taken for a correct description of their mysterious guest. The sad face, as pale as alabaster, the raven-black hair, the tall and graceful figure, were *his*; nay, the likeness was extended even to the rings of gold in the ears, and the rings upon the white hands. And he came from the same land, and bore the same name! How strange and ominous it all seemed!

His chamber was not far from hers, and as she read, she could hear him pacing restlessly up and down.

Now, can one conceive a series of experiences more calculated to awaken romance and passion in a young maid standing on the threshold of life, and visionary by both habit and disposition? Her whole nature was strangely, mystically stirred. Heaven itself seemed to have opened it, as the wind opens a blossom, with the soft airs of Love. Under any circumstances, the strange Captain was a man to exercise a spell over the hearts of women. His personal beauty was remarkable, to begin with; then his whole manner, though not over amiable, had that kind of power and mastery so beloved by the gentler sex; then again, he had signalled his appearance by an act of extraordinary kindness and generosity; and, to crown all, there was about him a strange, a startling, perhaps a supernatural, mystery. Mabel was completely conquered, realising in her trembling yielding spirit the words of the poet:—

> Love comes not as a slave
> To the uplifted finger; but, some day,
> When least expected, cometh like a King,
> And takes his throne!

From that night forward, the stranger reigned indeed.

All night she could scarcely slumber, so full was her heart of the new wonder and happiness; and ever as she lay upon her pillow she heard the sound of his restless footsteps in the neighbouring room. At last, she dropped to sleep, and her sleep was full of dreams. She saw the troubled ocean, the Phantom Ship, the strange Captain, and his spectral crew. When she awakened, the bells of the town were ringing gladly, and the room was full of light.

She sprang up and rubbed her eyes. Were the occurrences of the past night all a mere dream? Could they be real, being so wild and strange? Eager to satisfy herself, though she knew it was still very early, she sprang up and dressed.

It was a lovely winter morning. Looking from her casement, she saw the square and the quays all clothed in white, but the skies were clear azure, and the sea was calm and bright with morning red. And the bells rang gladly, scattering a golden snow of happy sound.

Full of gentle dread, lest she should find that all had been enchantment and that their guest had vanished like some good fairy, she left her room and approached the chamber where he slept. The door stood wide open, and peeping in, she saw that the bed was undisturbed. Her heart sank; was it, then, a dream after all? She listened at her foster-father's door; he was fast asleep, for she could hear his tranquil breathing. She peeped in on Martha, who lay quite sound, her plump hand stretched outside the coverlet, and her kindly face not yet touched by the morning light. Then she ran down stairs.

Her heart leapt joyfully, as she descended to the room where they had gathered over-night; for there, thrown on a chair, just as it had lain when he cast it off, was the stranger's cloak. Then it was no dream! It was true, it was real! Eager to make assurance doubly sure, she passed out of the kitchen, and in a moment her hope was answered. He was standing at the open door, and looking quietly out to sea.

Nor was his occupation of a very ghostly kind, seeing that it is not recorded that ghosts are given to strong tobacco. He had a quaintly carven pipe of wood between his lips, and was tranquilly smoking.

He heard her light footsteps behind him, and turned his face towards her. How fair and brave he looked in the rosy light of the Christmas morn! He did not smile, but greeted her with a quiet nod, fixing his bold black eyes upon her face.

Eagerly blushing, she hastened to him, and put out her little hand, which he took and held. Her hand was warm, but his seemed curiously cold. His look, however, was the very reverse of cold. Innocent and pure as she was, she did not like the expression. Why did he gaze at her like *that*? She felt her cheek burning, and drew her hand away.

"You have risen early, Sir," she said. "I fear you have slept ill?"

"I have not slept at all," he replied, and his foreign accent was even more marked than it had seemed over-night. "I am used to midnight watches, my pretty maiden, and sleep but little."

She did not know what to say further, but bethought her of the church bells, which were still ringing.

"Listen to the chimes!" she said, smiling. "How sweetly they sound, ushering in our dear Lord's Birth-day!"

Vanderdecken shrugged his shoulders, and blew a cloud contemptuously.

"They are out of tune, methinks. For the rest, I hate churches and church-music, and most of all on such a day as this. 'Peace and goodwill to men,' forsooth. As if there were any peace on this foul earth, or any goodwill in man or woman."

She looked at him in sad surprise.

"You do not mean what you say," she replied simply. "You yourself brought both goodwill and peace to our dwelling last night, and you must love the church chimes, since they tell of the coming of our Lord."

He gave a gesture of impatience, and at that moment the bells ceased to ring.

"They have stopped at last," he muttered. "Curse upon their jangling! and upon those that ring them!"

"Prithee, do not speak so," said the maiden; "good Sir, 'tis wicked!"

He laughed to himself, and then, struck by her earnestness, he looked at her curiously—not indeed without admiration; for if he was handsome, she was wonderfully fair. Her deep and steadfast eyes shone that morning with a new light, like rapture, and her cheek was softly flushed, and over all hung the glory of her hair, light as that of a painted Madonna. Her simple dress, consisting of a white gown and petticoat reaching to her ankles, added to her charm, and made her irresistible.

"You have not told me your name?" he said, smiling for the first time.

"My name is Mabel—Mabel Parr."

"Not the old man's daughter, I think he said, save only by adoption?"

"I have no other father," she answered, "except father Antony, who saved me from the sea when I was a babe."

"Father Antony? Ah, I remember—the ragged rogue who was here last night?"

Her face flushed indignant, and she began to feel very angry with the stranger.

"Nay, Sir, he is no rogue," she exclaimed, "and if his dress is careless, his heart is like a king's. He is the best and kindest man in all the world."

"Humph! He is fortunate at least in having so affectionate a champion. But, methinks, for one so delicate and fair, you have strange surroundings! I will say nothing of the company in which I find you, since you love them so well; but this house is but a poor house, and this place how call you it?—as cheerless as the tomb. Would you not like to leave it, and see the merry world?"

She looked at him in astonishment. His tone jarred upon her, and she liked neither his looks nor his words. As he spoke, he had drawn closer to her, and slipping his arm quietly round her waist, had offered to kiss her lips. She quickly drew herself away, but still kept her large truthful eyes fixed upon the man's face. There was nothing coquettish in the gesture or indignant in the look; she seemed simply startled and troubled, and anxious to discover from his countenance that he was only acting a part.

"I love my home," she said, "and I hope never to leave it."

A little disconcerted, and looking rather less amiable than before, the young man exclaimed impatiently:

"Nay, that is but childish nonsense. Young birds fly, and so must young maids. But perchance," he added, with a keen, penetrating glance, "there is some sweet company in the neighbourhood, which makes the drear place charming? You have a sweetheart, I suppose?"

"Nay, indeed, Sir," she answered simply.

"No sweetheart? That is strange; yet I should have been sorry, too, if any country clod or rude dweller between land and water had stolen away the heart of one so pretty. You have a look of gentle blood, and he that wins you should also be gentle."

She smiled and shook her head.

"I have no wish to be other than I am—a simple country maid. And I do not crave to marry."

"Why not, prithee?"

"I am happier as I am."

"Well, perchance you are right," cried the stranger, with a laugh. "Marriage is a dull business, and the bridal cakes but the driest of bread within. Nevertheless, bright eyes like yours were meant to make some one happy, and pretty hands like these were meant to fondle, and ripe lips like these to kiss."

Again he tried to suit the action to the word, and again she drew away from him, with the same troubled, searching, puzzled look.

This time he would have persisted, but he was interrupted by the voice of Martha calling from within. Mabel released herself, and hastened in to her foster-sister, who had just risen, and, with Keziah's assistance, was tidying the great chamber.

The strange Captain remained at the door, smoking and frowning.

"The girl is but a simpleton!" he muttered to himself.

He stood moodily smoking and looking seaward. People were beginning to stir about the square and quay; but it being a holiday, when country folk generally lie late, the signs of life were few. Far out at sea, on the very horizon line, the sails of a passing ship were visible. He watched them keenly, while they turned black against the risen sun.

Presently Martha tripped out and invited him into breakfast. He found Amos Parr and Mabel seated at the table, which was spread with cold meats, fresh eggs, bread, coffee, and wine. The old man wished him a kindly good-morrow, and he sat down at once.

Certainly there was nothing spectral or superhuman in the way he plied his knife and fork, taking a substantial breakfast and washing it down with wine. The meal over, he sat talking with his host on general topics—on the trade of the port, the kind of vessels which went and came, the state of opinion in England, which was then at war. He seemed particularly curious as to the number of the coastguard and their stations; and he asked, carelessly enough, whether ships-of-war or other Government vessels ever came that way. The replies he received seemed to satisfy him. With regard to himself and the circumstances which brought him to the place, he offered no explanation whatever, and Amos was too polite and too grateful to trouble him with questions. He expressed his intention, however, to stay in the town for a short time, until he received certain written communications from Holland; and he proposed without any circumlocution to retain his lodging in that house at a certain fixed sum. Amos, being so deeply in his debt, would have had him remain as an honoured and welcome guest; but this he would not hear of, and a fair amount was fixed.

"I shall not trouble you much," he said, in conclusion. "My wants are simple enough. All I shall crave is to come and go as I list, to join your board if I choose, not to be questioned if I stay away. Make no change in your daily life on my account, I prithee; but consult my humour by leaving me in peace, and we shall not quarrel."

So it was settled, and on that understanding, the strange Captain took up his quarters in the house of Amos Parr.

II. LIGHT AND DARKNESS.

A week had passed away since the stranger came to Bartlepool, and his prediction concerning the missing ship had been fulfilled to the letter. The Mary Jane had returned safe and sound, with a valuable cargo. She had sprung a leak during the late gales, and had been detained, under repair, at Rotterdam; whence she had sailed at last, with a favouring breeze, for the port of her nativity.

The delight of the little ship-chandler knew no bounds. He laughed, he wept, he sang rejoicingly, all in a breath; he embraced his daughters, and would, doubtless, have embraced his melancholy guest, if that personage had shown the slightest disposition to respond to such effusion.

For days after that, Amos and his friends, Antony and Captain Seth, were constantly engaged in business concerning the cargo of the precious vessel; and it thus happened that Vanderdecken and Mabel were thrown more than ever into each other's company, Martha being far too happy in her own love-affairs to dream of spoiling sport.

Since his first rough sally at love-making, the strange Captain had been wise enough to change his manner from one of coarse gallantry to another of melancholy respect, seeing which, Mabel had yielded more and more to the fascination of his handsome presence. It soon gathered that she was in love with her own ideal, and that if he did not seem to equal that, he would have very little influence over her. Half amused and half serious at first, he soon began to woo the beautiful girl in earnest. He told her wild tales of his adventures afloat, ever softening the tendency to rude colour when he saw that look of puzzled disappointment again appearing in her face. He described the strange lands of the tropics, and the lonely islands of the ocean where the pirates of South America hid their treasure, and the gloomy regions where the Patagonian giant walked as naked and bare as in the days when he seared Magellan. And if he sometimes drew upon his fancy, and pictured things unreal as airy visions, who shall altogether blame him? It pleased him to see her look of wrapt sympathy; to mark her colour as it went and came; to look into the clear wells of her truthful steadfast eyes, as she questioned him again and again, like a curious child. So, 'twas the old story,—

> She loved him for the dangers he had passed,
> And he loved her that she did pity them!

She would have been lost indeed, but for the fearless simplicity and instinctive shrinking from evil, which were at once her safeguard and her fascination.

Thrown thus into each other's society, they sometimes walked forth for hours together, along the upland flats or by the sea. She had no fear of him, or rather she had no distrust of herself, and taking little account of what lookers-on might say, she freely went with him, and showed him the scenes amidst which she had lived since childhood, and told him such old tales as she knew of that wild district. Thus they were spoken of by the town's folk as lovers, long before they had come to open confession.

It is not to be supposed that an individual so striking in appearance as Vanderdecken could come to Bartlepool, where, each man knew his neighbour's business better than his own, without becoming the subject of much gossip and speculation. Besides, several wild versions of the Christmas Eve episode, and the passage with Squire Lambe, had been extensively circulated about the place. He was, therefore, for more reasons than one, an object of interest. He himself shrank from such observation, and showed the least amiable side of his temper whenever he seemed the subject of remark or gossip. Frequently, he remained within doors, in the privacy of his chamber, for the greater part of the day, and often went out at night—not returning until close upon daybreak. Whither his business took him, or what was the nature of that business, no one was suffered to inquire.

It was one calm winter day, some fourteen days after the stranger's first arrival, that Captain Seth Stapleton stood on the shore just outside Bartlepool, looking impatiently townward. He was evidently expecting somebody. At last his patience was rewarded by the appearance of Jack Parr.

"Well, is she coming?" asked the Captain gruffly.

Jack nodded, and pointed towards the town, just outside of which a female figure was seen approaching. Coming nearer, it revealed the plump outline and pleasant features of Martha Parr.

"Here I am, Captain," she said, while he took her in his mighty arms and saluted her. "But why didn't you come up to the house?"

"Because I want to have a talk with you out in the open. Here, Jack, you grampus, hoist sail and run—we don't want you!"

Jack nodded, and made up back to the town. The Captain and his sweetheart walked on side by side.

"Well, what is it?" asked Martha presently.

There was a frown on the Captain's face, and at first he shook his head slowly from side to side, but made no reply. At last he halted, fixed his weather eye on Martha and said significantly:

"It's—it's about that strange Captain, my lass. I've no cause to worry your father, and it's no affair of mine; but the fact is, I'm onasy in my mind."

"Why?"

"About Mabel yonder. I don't like her goings on with that theer Dutchman. He may be a man, and he may be Davy Jones; but all I know is, there's something piratical about his figure-head. Here's over a fortnight gone past, and he's still at anchor in father's house. I shouldn't mind that so much, though folk do talk of his not a-beaing a honest craft, but I don't like to see Mistress Mabel and him keep company out-o'-doors."

"They *are* a good deal together," said Martha thoughtfully.

"A good deal? late and early. And—and they're too free, aint they?"

"I don't know; but if Mabel likes him"——

"That's where it is," growled the Captain. "You know, my lass, it's all very well for you and me to be seen together—all very well and in the way of nater—'cause we're agoing to be spliced. It's different with them."

"How's that?—If Captain Vanderdecken"——

"He's no more a Captain than you are. No, Martha, I've watch'd him a good bit, and the more I've watched him, the more I've seen he's not a fair trader. Well, I'm going to put it straight and clear to Antony Reilly, and we'll see what *he* thinks; so come along!"

Leaving the town behind them, they followed an old cart road which wound among the sand-hills in the immediate neighbourhood of the sea, and at last became entirely obliterated by drifting sand. The hills, or hillocks, rose on every side of them like waves fixed and changed in the act to break, some broad and large, some sharp and small, and each just thinly covered with arid grass and weeds. Here and there were holes, where the hares burrowed like rabbits. A large raven, floating low in the air, and sometimes hovering like a hawk, was drifting leisurely from hillock to hillock, on the look out for plunder.

They walked on for some distance, till they were quite lost among the sand. There were no landmarks, and it was difficult to find the way. At last Captain Seth climbed one of the larger hillocks to take a bird's-eye view and discover his bearings. He had no sooner reached the summit than he started, drew back, and beckoned.

Martha ran up at once and joined him, and peeping in the direction of his pointed finger, saw what had so suddenly attracted his attention.

Below them was a green meadow, watered by a shallow rivulet, which sparkled in the sunlight till it lost itself on the adjoining sea-sands; and in the centre of the meadow was a solitary hillock with a full view of the sea.

Sitting there side by side, with their faces turned seaward, were two human figures; Mabel and the strange Captain.

Only their backs were visible, but one of the Captain's arms encircled his companion's waist, while her head rested softly against his shoulder.

After a long look, Martha and Captain Seth drew back, and dived down again among the hillocks. Then they paused and looked at one another. The Captain shook his head ominously, and Martha seemed troubled and perplexed.

Without a word, they hastened onward. They knew where they were now, and had no difficulty in making their way in the direction of Antony Reilly's solitary dwelling. After walking for about half a mile, they left the shelter of the sand-hills, and, following the seashore, came at last in front of the Irishman's cottage.

It was still a rude place, though much improved since Antony had first made it his home. A low hut, with a door and one window, the walls of sea-stone, and the roof thatched and covered with weeds and wild leeks. At the back, with neither wall nor hedge, was a tiny garden, where a few cabbages drew a scanty subsistence from the sandy soil.

They found Antony "at home," lying stretched upon his bed, smoking and half dozing; and a few words acquainted him with the object of their visit. What opinion he formed of the matter will be gathered later on; so it is unnecessary to trouble the reader with the details of their conversation.

Meantime Mabel and her companion were sitting in the same attitude, watching the ocean. It was clear that the hour of their confession had come. The girl, with her eyes half closed, her head resting on her lover's shoulder, seemed lost in the luxury of her loving dream.



OUR CHURCH CHOIR: THE LEADING TENOR



DRAWN BY F. BARNARD

ENGRAVED BY J. SWAIN.

OUR CHURCH CHOIR: THE LEADING SOPRANO.

"And you love me, Mabel?" he whispered.

"Oh, yes!"

He drew her closer, and kissed her again and again. The expression of habitual gloom seemed to have passed from his face, leaving the light of an abundant happiness. As he kissed her their eyes met, and the light in his seemed to startle her a little, for she tried to disengage herself from his arms.

"Let us go home now!" she said, trembling.

"Not yet, my darling. Promise me, first, that we shall quit this place together. I am rich. We will go to some fairer, brighter land, out yonder, where we shall be happy with each other, and where you will forget your gloomy days in this dreary place."

"Nay, it is not dreary," she replied, "and I have been so happy here. Can you not stay amongst us?"

"I cannot, Mabel. In a little while I must go, and you will not let me depart alone."

"I will speak to my father," she said. "I will tell him that you love me, and wish me to become—your wife."

"Why take *him* into your confidence?" asked the other impatiently. "You are a woman, and mistress of yourself. You owe him no duty, since he is not your kin by blood."

Mabel looked at him in surprise. There was much in his words often, as well as in the expression of his face, to call up that puzzled gaze of pain and doubt.

"He is kin to me by Love, and that is more. I should be ungrateful, indeed, if I forgot him and those others who love me, even for *you*."

He caught her in his arms again.

"I would have you forget all—the world—all men and women in it—for my sake. What are they all to such love as ours? We crave no leave—we ask no blessing—all we need now is each other. You are mine, in spite of man or God!"

But she rose very pale, and released herself from his embrace. There was that in his manner, in his words, and his reckless looks, that terrified her.

"Let me go home," she said, holding out her arms to keep him from her.

"Mabel! are you angry?" he cried, seizing her hands.

"I am grieved, not angry. Sometimes, when you talk and look like that I am sorry that we ever met. And you despise God's blessing, without which such love as ours is an evil thing."

"You are a child," he cried; "you do not know the world. If you loved me truly you would trust me, Mabel, and you would need no other guide."

She turned her face away, and her eyes were dim with tears. They walked on in silence side by side. Simple as she was, she could not but observe that his affection for her had a certain desperation, and that his manner was deficient in respect. Nor had he said one word to imply that any sacrament was needed before they could be bound to each other indeed.

He watched her gloomily, then he said softly:

"I know I am unworthy of you. My life has been stormy and evil, and I have no faith in man or God. But your love would redeem me, Mabel! If you deny it to me I shall leave this place, and what becomes of me after that I care not."

"Why do you speak like that? I have told you that I do love you!"

"But not *as I* love, madly, fearlessly. You are so cold, so calculating, and you distrust me ever."

"I do distrust you when you talk so wickedly," she answered. "If your life has been evil only one thing can change it—repentance, and faith in God."

"Pshaw! must *you* preach to me? I tell you I love you, and that your love may make me a braver and a better man. If you loved me truly you would forsake all and follow me—without one fear, without one question."

"I would die for you, dear Philip!"

"You would die for me," he echoed incredulously. "I ask you not to die, but to live for me. I cannot settle down upon the earth, rest in one place, like common men. My place is out yonder on the wild sea—where the priest casts no shadow, and all is merry and free. With you for my companion, I would ask nothing more—your love would be blessing enough, my darling; and I should look for no heaven but in your sweet eyes."

They had come out upon the open shore, whence there was a path leading straight away to the little town. She paused and held out her hand.

"Good-bye, now! my father is waiting for me!"

"Mabel! have you no more to say?"

"Not now, Philip."

"Let me go back with you!"

"I would rather walk alone. I wish to think—yes, and to pray."

"To pray? Pshaw!"

"I wish you could pray, too," she said gently; "for I tremble for us both when I think of all that you have said. Good-bye, now, dear Philip!"

Her face, though wet with tears, was bright as that of an angel with infinite tenderness and pity. But he turned away angrily, mad with her for what he deemed her narrowness of mind and her superstition.

She sighed, and walked slowly on towards the town.

Left to himself, Philip Vanderdecken stood darkly looking out to sea. In spite of himself, the maiden had mastered him, and he felt like dust and ashes beneath her feet; but there was no true penitence in his soul—only wild passion and irritation. The girl was so simple and yet so strong; she understood his dark nature so intuitively; and even when his meaning was only half uttered, she was ready with her soft rebuke. A poor girl, ignorant of the world, simple even to childishness, she yet possessed some spiritual amulet against him, and it made him impotent, and kept her strong and pure.

As he stood thus, his figure drooped balefully, his expression became sinister, and he looked strangely worn and old. His extraordinary physical beauty seemed to shrivel up under the influence of some inner flame of sin. A curse came to his lips, and he clenched his hands in savage despair.

He was disturbed by the sound of a man's voice.

"So, Sir; I have found you!"

He looked up, and saw Lambe of Lambe's Waste, standing and surveying him from head to foot with a quarrelsome scowl. In a moment, his coolness and self-possession returned.

"You have found me—well?" he said, with a cold smile.

"You know me?"

"Perfectly."

"I know not, care not, who or what you are," continued the Squire, furiously; "but you have crossed my humour, and that is enough. Hark you, when a dog gets in my way, I spurn him with my foot, and when a man is rash enough to oppose me!"——

He paused, fiercely tapping the handle of his sword. Then he added, blustering: "You are my rival, Sir!"

"Your rival?"

"You woo Mabel Parr—fairly or foully, I care not which—but you woo her, that is enough, and your gold has dazzled the simple fools with whom she dwells. Now, mark me again, I love that maiden, and mean to possess her. She is beneath me, but 'tis my humour. Will you resign her to me; yes or no?"

"No."

"Then draw, Sir, draw!" cried the Squire, flashing out his long blade.

"Put up your sword," said the other, coldly.

"Draw, or I'll run you through!"

And he almost suited the action to the word. Vanderdecken, however, was instantly upon his guard. He wore only one of those short broad swords commonly used by sailors in those days, and it was but a sorry weapon compared with the long and far-reaching sword of the Squire. The weapons clashed together, Lambe attacking furiously, his opponent remaining calm and pale as death. In a moment it was all over. Vanderdecken was a skilful swordsman, and with a quick thrust he disabled Lambe's sword-hand and sent his blade flying into the air. With a fierce oath, Lambe fell back; then, lifting his weapon with the left hand, while the blood streamed from the right, he gave one look of concentrated hate and rage on his opponent, and rushed from the spot without a word.

The sun was now sinking behind the sand-hills, and casting a powerful gleam. The sea-sands gleamed like brown gold, the salt pools here and there shone purple and emerald, and the seas beyond were faintly flushed with red, save in great patches of mingled amethyst and green. Seemingly lost in thought, Vanderdecken wandered on, his back towards the town, until he reached the very promontory whence Antony Reilly had sailed, many years before, to rescue Mabel from the wreck. Here he sat down upon a rock, gloomily thinking; and as the shadows of the night came nearer and nearer, he seemed to grow older and sadder.

Darkness came, and found him thus.

Then slowly and silently, one by one, stars crept from the folds of night to pasture on the dark fields of azure, and at last, wrapt in an ever-brightening robe of spangled silver, the Moon arose like a pale shepherdess, watching and following her flocks as they shone and fed.

As the eyes of the strange Captain fell upon the silver crook of the Moon, then some three parts wasted, his face seemed to grow paler and more terrible, and he threw up his hands heavenward as if in terror and supplication. He rose wildly, and uttered a low, despairing cry; but no answer came to him out of the eternal stillness. Then, panting heavily, like a creature in mortal pain, he turned his hollow eyes on the sea, now lying black and cold, with gleams of dusky argent and mother-of-pearl, and searched it as far as the horizon, as if looking for some dreaded sign. But no sign came. The waters were still as death, with no ship or other moving thing upon them, but the faint throb of their solemn ablation, as they washed the shore, filled the windless air.

He stood thus for some time, waiting and watching; then with feeble limbs and dejected head, he crept slowly towards the darkened town.

III. THE FLIGHT.

For several days after that Philip Vanderdecken saw little of Mabel. In the first place, he kept his room until a very late hour each day, and when he did appear seemed moody and preoccupied. He could not avoid noticing, however, that a watch was kept upon him, and that every obstacle was now thrown in the way of his seeing Mabel alone. The little ship-

(Continued on page 19.)

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LOVE ME FOR EVER.

(*Continued from page 14.*

chandler, though kindly and polite as ever, had become anxious, and after consultation with Antony Reilly, he had even warned his foster-daughter. Somewhat to his surprise, Mabel received the warning with gentle acquiescence; for in truth she herself, much as her heart was implicated, had taken the alarm.

There was another point, moreover, which troubled Amos Parr. It was generally considered in the place that his lodger was a suspicious character, and possibly a foreign spy of some sort. The night following his parting with Mabel, a strange ship had been seen off Bartlepool, and a boatfull of armed sailors had rowed in over the bar. On landing, they had been met upon the quay by the strange Captain, and had conversed excitedly in some foreign tongue, which was understood to be Dutch. Before they could be further watched or interrogated they had taken their departure—as mysteriously as they came. To add to Amos's uneasiness, Vanderdecken was still perfectly dumb as to his position, his plans, and his business in the town. But one night, in his absence, an officer and band of coastguard came in and searched his room for papers. They found nothing, however. When questioned by Amos, they refused to give any explanation, but it was clear that their suspicions were excited in some way.

When the stranger, who was absent until close upon daybreak, heard of the domiciliary visit he evinced some agitation, which he mastered speedily. From that time forth his movements were closely watched, to his evident annoyance and irritation.

Unfortunately for himself, he had made one powerful enemy in the district—the savage Squire of Lambe's Waste; and it was partly owing to the vigilant dislike of this person that the coastguard became active. Lambe was manly enough, or too much ashamed of his own discomfiture, to say nothing of the duel on the sands, though for many days he carried his wounded hand in a sling; but he was not one to rest inactive, when his angry passions were once aroused.

At last, as he returned to the house one morning at sunrise, Vanderdecken found Mabel risen and alone in the kitchen. He paused at the door, looked round anxiously on every side as if to see whether he was followed, and then entered, closing the door softly behind him. Then he came towards her with extended arms.

"You are up early, my darling," he cried, and kissed her. She smiled fondly, but her face seemed very sad.

"I could not sleep. It was a wild night, and I thought of *you*. Why did you not come home?"

"I was away inland, on some business you would not understand. But call me Philip!"

"Philip!"

As she gazed at him, she saw that he was changed. Never had she seen him look so weary, so subdued, and never was his manner so gentle. To her surprise, he sighed heavily, and sank into a chair, as if exhausted.

"O Philip, what is it?" she exclaimed, bending over him.

"It is nothing, he returned, pressing her hand; "I am tired a little, that is all. There were rogues watching me, but I gave them the slip, and ran."

"Why *should* they watch you?"

"For want of wiser work to do, I suppose." He added somewhat bitterly, "I came to this place for peace, for rest, but they will drive me from it, in my own despite."

She did not understand, but his words hinted at some secret danger. Not daring to question him closely, she clung to him, and waited to see if he would speak. For some minutes, he seemed lost in thought; then raising his head, and speaking with a tenderness unusual to him, he said:

"I was right, Mabel. We shall have to part!"

"To part!" she echoed.

"God knows I would gladly linger here; it hath been like a fair haven, after years of storm. But if I go, do not thou grieve for me! I am not worth it—I am less worthy than even you can dream. You will forget me, my Mabel, and wed some better man."

"I shall never forget you! I shall never wed another!—But you will not go?"

He sat trembling, and still holding her hand. All his force seemed broken, all his wild *abandon* of manner had deserted him; and in his eyes there was a dimness, almost like tears.

"I am a villain," he continued; "and I was most a villain, my darling, when I asked you to share my fate. I would have craved your forgiveness ere this, but we have been so little alone. Will you forgive me *now?*"

"Oh, Philip!" she answered, sobbing.

"Do not weep, Mabel. You were right, and I was wrong. It was an unholy love that filled my evil heart, but you have changed it for ever. When I leave this place—and I *must* leave it—I shall take with me a blessed memory that, perchance, may save and purify me yet. When I am gone, you will pray for me, will you not, my darling?"

She could have borne his anger, but she could not bear his sorrow. She looked at him through her streaming tears, and cried, out of the fulness of her overburdened heart, and, forgetting all her doubt and dread,

"Oh! Philip, take me with you!"

He gazed at her steadfastly, as he demanded,

"You would go, my Mabel?"

"Yes; to the world's end!"

"You know not what you say. In linking your lot with mine, you would be preparing for a life of suffering and mortal danger. I told you I was rich; I lied; for I am practically poor and outcast. I have no home to offer you, no refuge; and, as my life is without anchorage, so is it without honour. Think better of it, and let me depart alone."

"Did you not say I might redeem you, and make you happy? If you leave me, I shall die!"

"There are some things worse than death," he answered sadly. "These would be your portion if you followed me! Remember that night when we first met. Remember my namesake, doomed for his sins and crimes. Could you follow such a man as *that*, even to save his soul from the eternal fire?"

"I could," she answered, looked solemnly upward. "If he repented, I would follow him, as I will follow *you*."

It was with a feeling almost of awe that he now regarded her. Her sweet face seemed to shine with angelic light, and her eyes were steadfast as two stars, with tender, child-like faith. He was silent, and she continued:

"Was it not strange, dear Philip! When first I saw your face, I thought 'twas *his*, and yet—I was not afraid; and afterwards, when I knew I loved you, I thought I should have loved you even more, if yours had been a fate as pitiful!"

"You knew me by his name," he returned, "and great as his have been my sins. I am not even worthy to kneel before you and beseech one touch of blessing. I have been a man of blood—a man of crimes without a name—a man for women to loathe and men to shun—or slay! Yes, Mabel, the curse of God is upon me, as upon him, and, like him, I bear the brand of Cain."

He paused, as if expecting her to shrink from him in terror. She did not shrink, but pressed her hand softly across his hair.

"If you have sinned, you have repented, dear."

"God knows I have! ah yes!"

She bent down softly, and kissed him on the brow.

"God bless you, Philip," she said.

Mastered by her infinite tenderness, he hid his face in his hand; and through his fingers she could see the streaming tears. Then he uncovered his face, and something of the holy light from hers was reflected upon it.

"And you love me—so much? Wretch as I am, you do not shrink from me? Oh! Mabel, think again! If I were doomed like him of whom you dreamed! If I were outcast for eternity, from man and God!"

Sweetly and unfalteringly her answer came:

"I would be outcast, too! yes, now and for evermore!"

With a wild sob, he caught her in his arms, and kissed her again and again—reverently, lingeringly, as one loving a holy thing. But even as they embraced thus, with the solemnity of a perfect love upon them, they heard voices overhead, and then footsteps descending from above. His manner changed instantly, and he whispered:

"I must see you alone to-night!—at moonrise, out yonder on the sands! It may be for the last time!"

For a moment she shrunk, hesitating; then, seeing his look of wild entreaty, and strong in the confidence of her own purity and devotion, she replied:

"Yes, I will be there."

The day passed uneventfully, and for the greater part of it Vanderdecken kept his room. He joined the family, however, at their simple mid-day meal, and never had his manner been so courteous and so gentle.

"I shall be leaving you soon, old friend," he said to his host; "but I shall ever remember how happy you made me here."

The little ship-chandler, still conscious of his great obligations to the speaker, responded warmly, expressing his regret that the acquaintance begun so auspiciously should ever come to an end.

"And that reminds me," he continued, "I have ready for you the amount of your generous loan, in notes of the county bank."

He rose, passed up stairs, and returned instantly with the notes in his hand.

Vanderdecken seemed to hesitate, but at last, with something of his old supercilious manner, he crumpled them up and thrust them into his breast-pouch.

"Will you not count them?" asked Amos.

Vanderdecken shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, thanks to your nobleness, my luck hath turned," continued Amos, chuckling to himself. "Our cargo has been bought at a good price, and our little ship is ready for another venture."

"Be a wise man," said his guest, coldly, "and run no more fool's risks in future."

The payment of the money, and its very touch, seemed to have transformed him again, and he sat frowning, without any remains of his former affability. Nothing more was said, and the day passed away dismally enough.

Directly darkness fell, Vanderdecken wrapped himself in his cloak and left the house, first exchanging a significant look with Mabel. He sallied out into the street, and made his way to the quay, which was quite deserted. There he stood looking out to sea for some time; then, turning back in his own footprints, he crossed the square, strolled through the town, and took the footpath leading to the seashore.

There was a lonely stretch of sand, well known to Mabel and himself, and close to the watered meadow where they had been seen by Captain Seth. Here he waited, while the moon rose and filled the quiet night with dusky beams.

At last he heard a light footstep, and in another moment Mabel had leapt into his arms.

"I have come, dear Philip, but I cannot stay long." She added, looking round somewhat nervously, "When I left the town, methought there was some one following, for there were footsteps behind me."

"It was, doubtless, your fancy, and, at any rate, you are now safe with me. Come, dearest, I have much to say to you."

They walked along side by side, his arm encircling her waist, along the sand, their frames wrapt in the moonlight and casting shadows black as ink on the silver sand. It was a happy time for both! The peace and consecration of the stillness was upon them, and a heavenly rapture was throbbing in their hearts.

"First, while I think of it," said the lover, "let me give you what is yours. You saw your father return me that money—I have kept it safe for you."

He drew the notes from his breast, and would have put them in her hand.

"But it is not mine," she cried. "O Philip, do not think of it—I cannot take it."

"I never thought to have it returned, and I have no use for it. If I kept it, it would be to waste in folly. Take it, I beseech you."

But finding she would not be persuaded, he at last returned the notes to his pocket. Then he said, pressing her closer to him:

"Mabel, this is our last night together. To-morrow I must go away."

"Oh, Philip! you will not go!"

"Alas, I must. I have thought it all over, and it is better that I should go. I thought I should be safe here, but every hour I linger is full of danger."

Again she uttered her loving appeal:

"O Philip! take me with you!"

"No, Mabel," he answered, and his face was set in firm resolve. "I once thought of it, but then—I was another man. Your love has changed me. I came but as a shadow in your life, I shall depart, and the sunshine will come to you again."

"Never without *you!* O Philip, do not speak so cruelly!"

He stooped and kissed her, and his eyes were dim with tears; but when he spoke his voice was firm, and full of grave solemnity.

"Before we part, my darling, let me tell you what you have done for me, and then, perhaps, you will know that I am kind, not cruel. Before I saw your face and learned to love you I had no faith in human goodness, but thought all things evil, and most evil the light hearts of women. I hated my fellows, and I was in revolt against God. Well, that is all over. Two blessed things have come to me, my darling—the power to love, the power to pray; and God, in answer to my prayers, has taught me how to act. The love that sacrifices itself is blessed—nay, even happier—than the love that gains. I shall not mar your life by linking it with mine. I shall leave you, but I shall not lose you. No, no, for God is good."

He paused, his voice broken with deep emotion, and on his face fell the full light of the moon, blessing and beautifying it. She could not speak, for she was sobbing wildly.

He continued:

"I shall go to suffering, perhaps to death, but not, *this* time, to sin or shame. Whatever happens, whatever you may hear of me or of my past life, remember that—I am *saved* through you. On this earth I do not think we shall ever meet again—and it is better so; but, perchance, we shall meet hereafter, with God. As the years roll on, and my face becomes dimmer and more strange, I shall become to you as a sad, strange memory. You will find another of your own people, worthier far; but you will pray for me, my Mabel, and you will teach your children to pray for me. will you not? That will be my best blessing, and as the answer to my own prayers, which shall rise for you and yours day and night, that is all that I shall ask."

She could not answer him, her heart was too full; but she clung around him, crying and despairing. It was a supreme moment, full of that happiness which comes only of great sorrow, and which is better and diviner than any mere gladness that can fill the hearts of men. For now they both knew, then and for ever, the consecration of the love which is not earthly, but divine; which abideth all things, suffereth all things, hopeth all things, because it knows, whatever may befall, that God hath made it and sanctified it.

Suddenly, as they stood together, Mabel started and listened, for a sound like hurrying footsteps had broken upon her ear.

"Oh, hark!" she cried.

Almost at the same instant there came a hurried tramp, a rush of dark figures towards them, and a loud voice crying, "Take him—alive or dead!"

With a cry, Vanderdecken drew his sword, and found himself instantly attacked by a number of armed coastguardsmen. Mabel screamed aloud, and stood wringing her hands.

What followed she scarcely knew; but she was faintly conscious of her lover's powerful form struggling with and striking against great odds. Shrieks and oaths filled the air, shots were fired, swords flashed: but in as brief a space as it takes to write these words, Vanderdecken had fought his way through his captors, and flown for life towards the neighbouring sand-hills. They followed, but did not seem to succeed in gaining upon him, for he was very fleet of foot; and though they fired at his retreating figure, he did not seem to be touched. As they disappeared, pursuing him, Mabel looked up and saw one of the party still remaining close to her, and at the first glance she recognised the Squire of Lambe's Waste.

"Courage, Mistress Mabel!" he said with mock courtesy. "The rogue will be taken!"

"O Sir, what mean you?" she cried wildly. "Why would they harm him? What hath he done?"

Lambe shrugged his shoulders, and laughed.

"A price is upon his head in his own country, and all true liegemen of the King are warned to give him up if need be. Dismiss the rascal from your thought. Come, shall I see you home?"

She shrank from him in horror, and when he approached as if to touch her the expression of her face disconcerted even him. With her heart bursting in her bosom, and tears streaming down her face, she hastened in the direction of the town. Half an hour afterwards she tottered into the house, where Amos and Martha were sitting, alarmed at her absence, and, with a low cry, fell like a corpse upon the floor.

By daybreak next day, the little town was full of the news that the strange Captain was wanted by the King's officers, to be given over as a *corpus vile* to the authorities of his own country, and to be tried for his life on charges of murder and piracy on the high seas. He had been traced to Bartlepool, where he had been in hiding, and where he had been for some time an object of suspicion to the local authorities. But the attempt to capture him had failed—that night, at least. He was somewhere in hiding, however, and would doubtless be speedily arrested.

The next day the house of Amos Parr was searched by a detachment of coastguardsmen; but of course without any result. The family was warned to give information to the authorities at once, should he return and attempt to take refuge there.

All that day Mabel wandered to and fro like a mad woman, watching, listening, waiting, fearing to hear some dreadful news. She heard with indifference the various wild rumours concerning her lover's character; if she believed, she did not heed them, for her soul was confident in the belief of his goodness of heart and regeneration. Again and again she knelt, weeping, and prayed for him in passionate despair

Half an hour after midnight, the night following, as Mabel sat in the old chamber with her father and foster-sister, a tap came to the window. Mabel sprang up with a cry, thinking perhaps it was her lover returned at last. She threw open the casement, and who should leap in but Antony Reilly?

The moment he entered, he smiled and nodded; then, closing the window carefully, he laughed and snapped his fingers. Then, while they looked at him in astonishment, he addressed his foster-child.

"Don't be distressed any more, darlint," he cried; and added, sinking his voice a little, "The quare Captain's *safe*!"

She uttered a joyful cry, and stretched out her arms to him.

"First give me a drop to keep out the could," he said, "and I'll tell you all about it!"

The inevitable case-bottle being on the table, he walked over and helped himself to a glass, smiling pleasantly to himself, as if at the recollection of some amusing adventure. Then, seating himself, he drew Mabel to him, and said:

"He's safe on the say, good luck to him, and this was how it came about. Last night, when the blackguards were after him, he came across an ould smuggling rogue who never did a good deed but once—and you know when that was, darlint! Now the ould rogue had been angry wid him, by the same token that he was trying to stale away the heart of a little colleen; but when he saw him pale and bleeding, wid the thieves of the world after him, the ould rogue relinted, and knowing all the caves and holes between here and Flamsen Head, he hid him away snug in one of them. Look at that now! The blackguards searched all night long, and twenty times, darlint, they walked over the very ground where the ould rogue and the quare Captain were hid away, like rabbits in a hole!"

"God bless you, father Antony!" cried Mabel, kissing his hands. "And he is safe, quite safe, you say?"

"Don't be bothering of me!" returned Antony, with twinkling eyes. "Now, why wouldn't he be safe, when such an ould rogue as *that*, wid as many corners as a rat to run in, had the hiding av him? He lay snug all day, and sure he didn't miss the taste of a dhrop of spirits to keep him warm. Well, then he tould the ould rogue that there was a ship coming this very night to take him away. The place was the Cormorant's Point, close to the Wantle Reef, and he was to signal from the shore. Well, what did the ould rogue do, but take care that, when night came, the blackguards of coastguards were many miles inland, like dogs on a false scent. Well, night came, and, thank the Lord, it was dark as my grandmother's black cow. The quare Captain kept snug, and the ould rogue kept watch. Sure enough, before the stroke of even, he saw the lights of a ship two miles off the shore, and he, the Captain had tould him, he fired two shots out of a gun. Then the quare Captain came running out, and they went down to the Cormorant's Point, and they hadn't stood there many minutes before they heard the sound of oars. Then the ould rogue



HE STOOPS TO CONQUER.



THE GREEN DRAGON IN CHANCERY

held up a light to guide them, and the boat came in, and in a minute the quare Captain was jabbering to his friends—a mighty ugly crew they looked, by that token. Then he stepped into the boat, but not before he'd given the ould rogue's hand a squeeze for thanks, and bid him take his blessing to a certain poor little colleen, who might be onaisy about him, somewhere on shore."

Mabel wept, partly for joy, but partly for sorrow, for she felt that the parting had come indeed. Amos Parr looked relieved and glad.

"I'm glad he has escaped," he said. "Whatever he has been, he saved me from ruin—I shall never forget that!"

"More power to him!" cried Antony exuberantly. "And more confusion to the blackguards that missed him! He hadn't been gone a quarter of an hour when they came down on *me*. "What ship's lights are those?" they said, looking out to sea, suspicious like. 'Ship's lights,' said I, quite innocent, 'you must be dreaming.' Then they turned on me sharp and fierce, and asked if I'd seed anything of that d——d Dutchman. 'Is it me?' said I. 'You know he's wanted,' they said; 'there's a price upon his head.' Then I couldn't help speaking up for him. 'There may be a price,' I said, 'but bad luck to him that takes it. He's a gentleman every inch of him; and if he *is* a Dutchman, don't blame *him*, but his father and mother—who never axed his opinion where he'd like to be born!' They went away swearing, and when they were gone, I came along without delay, to tell you all about it!"

IV.—MABEL IS LEFT ALONE.

So the strange Captain disappeared from Bartlepool, leaving at least one heart the sorer and the sadder.

The ghost of her old self, Mabel wandered about the lonely house, praying and dreaming to herself. Her face was pale and worn, and her eyes were full of a strange hunger, and the image of a beloved face floated ever before her, like a phantom from a fairer world. Her foster-father and sister watched her with deep anxiety, and Antony Reilly tried in vain to comfort her. Her soul was no longer in that peaceful place, but far away with him—far away upon the dark waters. One companion she had—the book containing the old legend; and she read it again and again, as if it were Holy Writ, for it called up the vision she adored, and filled her with a faint, mysterious hope. As the days advanced, she found it more and more difficult to separate the picture of him she loved from the dream-picture of his namesake; and often, sleeping or half awake, she heard the ocean roar, and saw the fatal Vessel flash by, and saw from its shadowy deck the flashing of her lover's living face.

Several weeks after the stranger's disappearance, two packets, bearing the mark of a small seaport in Holland, reached the ship-chandler's house. One was addressed to Amos Parr, and when opened was found to contain a roll of English bank notes (the very same, indeed, which Amos had paid to his guest), together with this writing:—

"*Take these back from me, and add them to the dower of your foster-child, Mabel Parr. I give them to her as the last legacy of one who brought her much sorrow, but who would gladly atone.*"

There was no signature.

The second package was simply a letter, addressed to "Mistress Mabel Parr, at the house of Amos Parr, the ship-chandler, at Bartlepool, England. It ran as follows:—

'*Forget me if you may; forgive me if you can; but, for my sake, be happy. Though I am far away, I can see you from afar, the one star of my lonely life, shining patiently across the sea. Think well of him who was doomed by hate, and was to be saved by love—by a love as patient and as pure as yours. And so, with all blessings, farewell!* PHILIP."

That was all. To the eyes of all but one the words were strange and wild enough, but to these of Mabel they were full of beautiful meaning. She was not forgotten.

There was in the disposition of this simple girl a curious firmness of resolve, a strange tenacity of opinion. Having once decided instinctively on any way of thinking, it seemed quite impossible for her to change; and her love was, therefore, subject to no aberrations of mood. Whence she derived this fidelity of character, we cannot say; certainly there was little in her upbringing to teach it to her; and it is more than possible that it was an hereditary acquisition, derived from a perfect father or mother, perhaps from both. Blood, saith the proverb, is thicker than water; and science teaches us that many of our noblest predispositions, and sometimes the whole "set" of the moral nature, come even from our remote ancestry. Be that as it may, Mabel was what we have painted her—a maiden who threw into all her deeper feelings, and now, most of all, into her love, the tenacious devotion of a *réligieuse*.

So, instead of taking the world into her confidence, and wailing very loudly over what was lost, she seemed to resign herself to the peaceful current of her former life, avoiding company, seeking consolation in her own thoughts and dreams. Her love was too precious a possession to show to others; she kept it as a secret crystal, or consecrated beryl, to be regarded only by her own spiritual vision. Nor was it altogether a sad, or a disturbing, possession. Out of love's sorrow, perhaps, however cruel, there always comes more pleasure than pain,—if we do not measure pleasure, as the base measure it, by the mere enjoyment of the senses. To her thenceforth, whatever might befall, the world was made holy through suffering, beautiful through affection. Not Death could alter that, *now*.

Nevertheless, as the days wore on, her friends regarded her with deep anxiety; for the strong, steadfast light which Love had lit within her was burning far too constantly, and beginning to consume the delicate physical frame which encircled it. She grew thinner and paler, and her foot fell more feebly upon the ground; nor, though she took long walks by the sea, ever loving to gaze upon it and listen to its music, did its breezes convey to her cheek the hues of health.

Months passed away, and summer came; but she did not brighten: but her look seemed more listening and expectant. It is little matter for surprise that, as her bodily health waned, her mental health began to suffer too. She began to be conscious of visions—not sleeping merely, but waking; and finally, by sheer fatality, the one vision which continually haunted her was that which had first come to her out of the old Legend. She could no longer distinguish clearly between the Vanderdecken whom she had known and loved and the Vanderdecken of popular superstition; they became one and the same—a doomed, unhappy creature, sailing for ever on a sea of storm and pursued by the wrath of God.

Under these circumstances, her imagination fed more and more upon the precious book. She had it by heart, every line of the record, every picture, and every word. She remembered the conditions of the miserable wanderer's salvation;—that she who loved and would save him must sail forth to seek him in the great Ocean, and, when his ship was found, must row into it in a boat with her own hands, leap upon the deck alone, and call upon her lover thrice in the name of Christ the Lord.

As the year began to wane again, and leaves to fall, and cold winds to blow, her hunger became deeper and wilder, till she could no longer rest in peace. Then came a time of darkness and mystery, in which, seized by some sickness and yielding to delirium, she seemed to lose her sense of the solid world. Much that followed was strange and terrible to her, and for a long space she could scarcely determine what was real and what was dream.

PART IV.

THE LONELY DEEP.

A weary space of time had passed away. A ship was sailing upon the lonely deep, far from any land.

Away on the dim horizon line day was breaking—a dull orange streak deepening to crimson, beneath a sky as black as coal. Already, in some mysterious way, the ripples by the waves were beginning to sparkle, like grains of salt, with the luminousness of the sun that had not yet risen.

To the group of sailors gathered forwards on the deck, came Captain Seth Stapleton, just emerged from his cabin, and smiling good humouredly.

"A merry Christmas, lads!"

"A merry Christmas to *you*, Sir, and many of 'em!"

"We'll make it as merry as we can. I've given orders to serve out a double allowance of grog all round"——

"Three cheers for the Cap'n!"

"And harkee, lads, the missus is in the cook's galley, makin' something as will surprise you!"

So saying, he walked up to the steersman, glanced at the compass, and noted the course they were steering. Meanwhile, one of the group in the forecastle, an old weather-beaten sailor, was muttering gloomily to himself:

"A better Cap'n never sailed! I've only one fault agin him—that he went and got spliced last voyage!"

"Why not, Ben?" asked a young seaman.

"Why not? Cos a sailor ought to be married to his vessel, and no one else. Then, to make things wuss, he's brought his wife aboard, and, as if *that* warn't enough, another mad faymale with her."

"Look at what luck they've brought us!" said the young seaman.

"Fair wind and fine weather so far; but we aint landed yet, mates, and we're coming to them regions where the Flying Dutchman sails."

They were standing close to the cabin skylight, and Mabel, who was below, heard every word they said. It all seemed like a dream. Opposite to her, looking sadly at her, was Antony Reilly, and he was saying in a low voice, half addressing her, half talking to himself:

"Is it on dry land I am, or on the salt say? I swore never to go to say again, but what could I do when my own darlint said to me, 'Father Antony, it's to say *I'm* going, and I'll never rest till I find him alive or dead? Ah, gramachree, it's just wild and mad ye are, chasing a ghost, running up and down the lonely wather after your own shadow. God help ye, my child—and keep ye from the Divil—I mane the Flying Dutchman."

Mabel looked at him fixedly, and at first her brain seemed to wander, and then she remembered all. Yes, the lover who had come to her that Christmas Eve a year before was, indeed, the doomed Captain, and she had come forth to seek him on the great Ocean, trusting God to guide her through the waters to him. And what strange changes had come about in a year? Her brain seemed to wander again as she thought of them. Captain Seth had married Martha, and was master of a great ship, sailing between England and America; and, at Mabel's entreaty, he had taken her with him, along with Antony, her foster-father; and, though they were all so gentle with her, she saw by their pitymg eyes that they thought her mad. Sometimes, indeed, she thought so too; for her memory would fade, and their faces would vanish into air, and she would seem to be lying, sick and weary, in her little room at home.

Yet it was all true! so strangely true! and she was to save him, though she died so doing. Ah! but they had sailed and sailed for days, for weeks—it seemed to her for years—and had scarcely seen a sail. Perchance she would never find him; the waters were so wild and vast!

She crept up the cabin stairs, and came out upon the cold deck. The purple ball of the sun was just peeping over the horizon, and the sea was sparkling from wave to wave.

And there on the deck, standing and looking at her so strangely, were Martha, and Captain Seth, and her gentle foster-father!

"Mabel, dear, are you better?" asked Martha.

How strange her voice sounded! It seemed like a voice in a dream.

"I am quite well," answered Mabel. "What day is this, father Antony?"

"My darlint, it's Christmas morning!"

"And we have been for months on the ocean, and have seen nothing."

"Barrin' flying fish—and porpoises—and now and then a ship."

"But not *his* ship!" she moaned. "'Twas the same last voyage—always the same bright calm water and the same quiet sky. It wearies me to death! It breaks my heart! Oh, that the winds would blow a hurricane, and waft me on to *him*!"

Here Captain Seth, who had been looking thoughtfully towards the rising sun, said suddenly,

"You're likely to have your wish, lass—leastways, I don't like the look of them clouds. It's going to blow out of the sun, and we'll lighten her a bit."

He walked forward, and immediately she heard a shouting, a tramping of feet along the deck.

"All hands aloft to shorten sail!"

"Aye, aye!"

Then she heard in the air a murmur as of the rising wind, and from the sea a sound as of troubled water. She ran to the vessel's side and looked over.

"See!" she cried joyfully. "The waves are beginning to rise!"

They seemed to think her mad still; else why did they touch her gently, and try to lead her below? But she would not stir. Her heart leaped gladly at sight of the rising storm.

"Look, what small bird is that, flying hither and thither in the trough of the waves? It is the storm petrel, that only comes when tempest is brewing. And, hark! what's that?"

"Only the wind, Mabel," said Antony, in her ear.

"It sounds like a voice—his voice—out yonder on the ocean, crying 'Come hither! save me! save me!' Philip, my love!" she continued, stretching out her arms and crying, "I am coming! I am coming!"

"Wheesht, mavourneen! there's no one to hear ye!"

"*He* can hear me," she replied. "As his voice is wafted to me, so is mine to him!"

"To the Flying Dutchman, is it? God help ye, child!"

"Don't look at me like that, and turn your head away. Father Antony, you think that I dream—that I am mad!"

"Not mad entirely," he replied, soothingly; "but it's in love ye are, and that's a *kind* of madness, anyhow. O mavourneen, it makes my heart ache to hear you cry and to see your pale face ever growing paler and paler, and to know what vexes your poor heart is all a drame. Sure, I never married myself, but I thought ye'd marry some bould gentleman and make me a grandfather without the thrubble of a wife; and now you're running up and down the earth after your own shadow, and ye'll never catch it, for fast as you fly, the crathur flies before!"

How sadly and pitying he gazed at her, and how weary and grey he seemed! And while he was speaking his voice seemed to grow fainter, and to be lost in the roaring of the wind.

The ship was now sailing along under easy sail before the gale which came from the east like blast from a furnace; before her lay a great dimness; and behind, the crimson rising of the sun. She stood clinging to the bulwarks, and looking at the leaping waves. Was it her dream also, that they took the likeness of flashing faces and waving arms, as in some tempestuous dance of death? Sometimes, as the vessel rose and fell upon the tossing waves, she seemed to swoon away, and be again lying on some tumbled bed on land; but ever when she opened her eyes again, there were the rushing waters, and the weather-beaten ship, and the round eye of the sun glaring with baleful light.

How long they sailed thus she could not tell; but it seemed a long, long time. All at once, however, without a moment's warning, it became black dark—so dark that she could not see an inch before her eyes. She felt the deck rolling beneath her feet—that was all. And the wind fell as suddenly as the darkness had fallen, so that she could hear the sails flapping loose overhead.

Then she heard voices.

"All hands forrard!"

"Aye, aye!"

Presently she saw a red light coming to her along the deck—Captain Seth carrying a lantern.

"The wind's dropped dead still," he said (how faintly his voice sounded!); "and we've run into a black mist. I hope it isn't a land fog, that's all. Anyhow, we've tried the lead, and can't find soundings."

Then she heard another voice—that of her foster-father—whispering.

"Is there danger, think you?"

"I don't like this here fog—it aint in the way of nature. If there *is* danger, Old Nick's at the bottom of it!"

"Old Nick?"

"Leastways, his namesake—the Flying Dutchman!"

The name seemed like a spell. A faint, mysterious light, like the earliest gleam of dawn, spread suddenly through the air. The sea grew dimly phosphorescent. Then Mabel, fixing her eyes on the wall of darkness, saw there the luminous outline of a vessel under full sail. It trembled and changed, flashed and faded, like a spectre cast by a magic-lanthorn.

"Look! look!" she cried, pointing. "A ship!"

"Where?"

"There—close to us!"

"A vessel, sure enough," cried the Captain; "and not five ships' lengths away. Forrard there!"

Then the sailors came aft murmuring together, and clustered around the Captain.

"Is there steering way upon her?"

"No—she's drifting abeam in the fog"

"Look at that ship! We're drifting down upon her. Ship ahoy!"

Was it fancy, or did a faint cry, like an echo, come from the distance—"Ship ahoy!"

"Look how she's tossing and rolling, though the sea here is smooth as glass."

"Spake her again!" said Antony's voice.

"Ship ahoy!"

Again the faint echo "Ship ahoy!"

"What ship's that?"

"What ship's that?" said the echo, and as it died away, it was followed by a sound like mocking laughter.

"Powers above," said Antony, "do you hear that?"

"Hear it?" cried the Captain; "aye, and I know what it means. Look at the blue light in her rigging and the glimmer of her masts. That's no ship sailed by flesh and blood. It's the Flying Dutchman!"

His voice rose to a scream, and was answered again by that distant laughter. The sailors fell upon their knees, hiding their faces in terror. But Mabel now knew that the hour of her prayer was come. She strained her eyes at the vision, and saw the outline of the ship grow clearer and more terrible, while the ghostly light grew, and the sea seemed like a liquid fire.

"Philip!" she cried, and would have sprung over the vessel's side, had not gentle hands seized and detained her.

"Keep her back!"

"Do not touch me!" she cried. "Let me go to him!"

She saw them gathered around her, looking at her in horror.

"The sea is still as glass," she said, "and the ship waits there as if anchored in the bay. See, how close; Captain Seth, do not part us *now!* Let me go to him!"

"Go to him—how?"

"Launch a boat, and let me go to him!"

"To your death? No, no!"

"Not to death, but life!" she cried. "Hear me, pity me, help me! If this hour passes by and we do not meet, we shall be lost for ever, he and I. Father Antony, speak for me—do not break my heart! Do not let me die before your face. I have no fear. Let me go to him! let me go to him!"

Her voice rose wailing upon the air, and, overpowered by emotion, her senses seemed to swoon away. When she next became conscious, the figures of the crew were crowding round her, and Antony was looking at her with his kind, sad eyes.

"Is it your wish, darlint, before God?" she heard him ask.

"Yes! yes!"

"Ye'll die if we deny ye?"

"It will kill me, Father Antony."

"Then come, darlint," he said, taking her hand; and she saw that the bulwarks were open, and that a small boat was tossing at the ship's side. She looked for the Phantom Vessel!—and lo, it was grown so dim, and seemed so far away, that its outline seemed scarcely distinguishable. She leaped into the boat, and would have taken the oars, but lo! there was Antony again in the boat with her, and still looking at her with his sad eyes.

"Father Antony, I must go without you."

"No, darlint, we'll go together."

"Then only as far as the ship's side. My help is useless unless I stand upon the decks *alone*."

"God bless ye, darlint! I'll row you there with my own hands. When your work's done, I'll be ready to bring your back, or to die along wid my child."

They were out upon the gleaming waters. Square walls of darkness seemed on every side of them, and against one wall, like black cloud, the vision of the ship was playing like lightning—like liquid lightning with a shape and form. Mabel was seated in the stern of the boat, eagerly bending forward. Antony was rowing, with his back to the ghastly ship. And (how strange it seemed), as fast as he rowed, the waters seemed to suck the boat back, while his arms seemed weaker and weaker, and he panted for breath.

"Quicker! quicker!" she cried.

"Is it there still, darlint?" he asked, leaning on his oars.

"Yes. Look!"

"I've a stitch in my neck, and daren't turn my head. There's time yet! Let's turn, darlint!"

"No, no—hasten on!"

"You won't go back. Say your prayers, then. I'm trimbling like a leaf, and the more I row, the more the water seems to take the strength out of my ould arms."

What was that, coming so faint, yet so distinct, above the sound of wind and water? She heard it distinctly—a voice calling her own name.

"Mabel! Mabel!"

With a wild cry of joy, she stood up in the boat and answered, "Philip!"—and instantly, to her wonder, the power that had held the boat back seemed to slacken, and they were flying at lightning speed towards the Phantom Vessel. She could feel the thrill of some strange force drawing them nearer and nearer, as a needle is drawn to the loadstone; and water and mist seemed troublously moving and drifting with them, as a river streaming and shooting towards a fall.

And still she felt no fear, only a wild, supernatural exaltation.

As they drew nearer, the luminous outline on the wall of darkness grew dimmer, but she saw distinctly the masts and sails of a vessel, rocking up and down in great, smooth waves. The closer she approached, the less ghostly it appeared, till she saw that it was a large, long vessel, barque-rigged, with a very low, black hull, a high, old-fashioned poop, and tapering masts. The sails were torn and old, but dripped with a kind of faint phosphorescence, and the body of the vessel, where it touched the water, seemed covered with slimy weeds. The decks seemed crowded with shadowy figures, but they did not stir.

Almost before she could think again, she was close under its side,—and the bulwarks were open, and strange faces were gazing down upon her.

"Ship ahoy!" said Antony; and she saw hands stretched out to assist her up the vessel's side.

As she sprang up to do so, Antony uttered a despairing groan.

"Darlint, take me with you!" he said; then seeing her look of reproach and entreaty, he murmured, "Kiss me, then, before ye lave me!"

He folded her in his arms and kissed her, while the boat rose and fell on the great waves.

"God an I his saints watch over you!"

There was a sound like low thunder, as, assisted by ghastly hands, she sprang up on the deck, which was firm and solid beneath her feet. She looked around her. On every side were seamen, so strangely, quaintly dressed!—but not one of them moved or looked at her! Some gazed up vacantly at the gleaming sails, others bent over the vessel's side, others leant against the masts, and all were very pale, with faces like those of drowned men that she had seen. At the helm was one old, old seaman, with a white beard that reached to his breast, and a face like wax, and glassy eyes that were fixed on vacancy. Yet all the crew, despite their death-like pallor and strange supernatural stillness, had a ghastly oddity. Some wore quaint sugar-loaf hats, and some red cotton nightcaps; and many held in their mouth quaint pipes of wood. They were little broad-set men for the most part, with round faces and pale blue eyes

She advanced upon the deck, stretching out her hands.

"Where is the Captain of this ship?" she said.

They didn't answer. They did not even look at her.

The vessel rose and fell softly on the sea.

She moved to one who stood near her, and touched him on the sleeve; he was looking up at the sails, and he did not even turn his head. It was like touching a dead man, a man dead and frozen. Her dread and horror deepened; and she moved along the deck; and it seemed to her that the spectral seamen, though they did not stir, all followed her with their eyes.

Who was this standing in the centre of the vessel, and leaning against the mast? A tall man, with a face like marble, and rings of gold in his ears. She knew him in a moment, though his face was so worn, and his hair so wild and grey. It was he, her lover, whom she had come to seek.

But why did he not gaze at her? Why did he not turn and welcome her with one look or word? He stood leaning wearily against the mast, his eyes vacant, his form as nerveless as any there.

"Philip!" she said, and touched him. "Philip!"

He did not seem to hear. It was like touching a man long dead.

The stillness was deeper and more dreadful; not a sound was heard of wind or sea, though she still felt the troubled motion beneath her feet. She spoke to him again, and would have put her arms about him, but she was afraid. Then, sick and despairing, she sunk upon her knees beside him, and prayed aloud for him in the name of Christ the Lord.

What was that? Even as she prayed she seemed to hear from across the sea a sound like Christmas bells! She looked up at her lover. Did she dream, or did he begin to move; moving his head from side to side like one awaking from sleep?—and did the seamen, who had been so still, move from their posts and pass like shadows to and fro?

"Philip, it is Christmas Day!" she said. "Our Lord hath sent me to you, this happy day, when He was born"

Again the bells ringing, louder and louder' and then a sound as of happy voices singing the Christmas hymn:

> "Hark the herald angels sing!
> Glory to our new-born King!
> Peace on earth, goodwill to men!
> Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

She looked up into his face. Yes, he was listening! On every side of her the crew were clustering and listening too. As the last notes of the hymn died away, he looked down upon her, smiled, and held out his arms.

She sprang up, and fell sobbing on his breast.

At that moment, it seemed as if the bells clashed out again, and innumerable voices sang the celestial hosanna; but even then all grew dark as night, and, with a shock like earthquake, the vessel was rent asunder.

The waters boiled up beneath her, the vessel sank like lead, and, still clinging to her lover, she was swept, as by the maelstrom, deep down into the darkness of the sea.

PART V.

THE SECOND CHRISTMAS EVE.

I.—THE SHADOW IN THE SICK-ROOM.

Was she waking or dreaming? With the wild sound of bells in her ears, she opened her eyes, and lo! she was lying in her own little room at home, and a bright light, streaming in through the window that looked upon the sea, was creeping towards her across the floor, till it touched like a white hand the snow-white bed.

She stretched out her own white hand, and felt the warm beam, wondering and listening; for hark! the bells were still ringing clearly, as if very far away.

She turned her head, moaning, on her pillow. Who was that sitting between her and the window quietly reading in a book? She looked up, and Mabel recognised Martha, her foster-sister, and, looking at her wildly, named her name.

Martha rose and gently arranged the pillow underneath her head.

"Martha, is it you? Where am I? What hath happened, dear?"

She spoke so faintly that the other could scarcely catch the words

"Hush!" said Martha; and like a tired child, Mabel closed her eyes. She felt so weak and weary, and even when she opened her eyes, her head went round. But presently she started and spoke again.

"Philip! it is I! I have come to you! O Philip, speak to me!"

Then opening her eyes, she saw Martha bending over her.

"Martha, where is he? where is my Philip? Methought I held him in my arms, and that we sank into the deep sea together. And the angels were singing, oh so sweetly, and the bells were ringing. Hark! they are ringing now!"

"Lie and rest, dear."

"Whose hand is this I am holding? Is it Philip's?"

"Nay, it is mine—do you not know me, your sister Martha?"

The blue eyes opened, and the sad face smiled sadly and faintly.

"Yes, I know you; but where is Philip?" she murmured, closing her eyes again; and after a little space she asked, "Why are the bells ringing?"

"'Tis the church bells," answered Martha. "'Tis the Sabbath, and to-morrow is Christmas Day."

"Methought that Christmas Day had come and gone. Why am I lying here?"

Something like a tear fell on her thin wasted hand, that trembled on the coverlet.

"You have been very, very ill—but you are better now."

"How did I come back? I was out there upon the sea, with Captain Seth in his ship, and I found my Philip, and, just as we embraced, the Phantom Vessel faded away."

"You have been dreaming, dear."

"Only dreaming? Perchance, then, I am dreaming still? How sweet the bells sound? It is time to rise and go to church and pray."

She half rose on her pillow, and tried to quit the bed; but Martha's gentle arms crept round her, and, with a sigh, she sank wearily back. Then the room and the sunlight faded away, and she sank again into a sleep like death. She lay thus for an hour; but to her bewildered sense it seemed only a few minutes, and when she opened her eyes again her father Antony was standing near her, looking worn and sad, just as she had seen him in her dream.

"Father Antony, is it you?"

"It's me, darlint!"

She looked at him long and wearily.

"Why are you crying, father Antony?"

"Crying, is it?" answered the kindly voice in broken tones. "Sure I'm not crying, but laughing like to split—to see the little colleen so bright and well. Praise be to the Lord, you'll soon be running about again!"

She stretched out her hands, and he took them and kissed them gently. If he was not crying, why were his eyes so wet, and why did the warm dew trickle upon her fingers? And, feeling the soft touch, she could not help crying too.

"Don't *you* cry, darlint, for the love of God!"

But she sobbed like a little child, scarcely knowing why; and, sobbing thus, her spirit wandered away into darkness again.

Yes, it was only a dream.

Worn with her one haunting thought, Mabel had fallen into a low fever, and for many a long day she had been fluttering between death and life. Often, by the wild words she uttered as they watched by her bedside, they knew that her soul was far away upon the ocean, following some visionary quest. They watched her with unwearying love and devotion, hoping against hope. The local leech whom they called in, a man skilled in herbs, was fearful that she would never recover, or that if she recovered, her wits would be wholly gone. But now, when he came in on tiptoe and looked at her sleeping, and felt her fluttering pulse, he answered their questioning eyes with a brighter look.

"I think the danger is passed," he whispered; "for look, her sleep is quite peaceful. Do not disturb her, and when she wakens, give her the cup I have mixed for her to drink. Should the fever seem coming back, send for me again."

She slumbered till late in the afternoon, and when she opened her eyes, they saw at once that the vacant look was gone. She knew them every one, and greeted them by name. Then she took the cup from Antony's hand, and smiling sweetly, drank the draught; it was cool and grateful, being made of soothing simples, and when she had drunk it, it spread like balm through all her veins.

It was a sad company that gathered in the old chamber that Christmas Eve. Antony was there, listening to every sound that came from the little room above, where Martha sat watching; Amos sat in his arm-chair, sipping his glass thoughtfully from time to time; and late on in the evening Captain Seth came in, treading on tiptoe, and hailing his friends in a voice fainter and more far away than ever.

"How is she, father?" he asked in a whisper, as he took his seat.

"Better, thank God! Master Colict thinks she will recover yet."

The Captain gave a murmur of satisfaction. All sat silent, and the room was full of that solemn hush which ever accompanies sickness, and death. Presently Captain Seth spoke again.

"I see a strange ship coming in over the bar, as I was a-crossing the quay!"

Amos nodded, not much interested, and the Captain continued:

"'Taint often a vessel comes into port this time o' year, unless driven by stress of weather. And the night's like summer, father! I suppose she's some passing trader, run short of water."

Amos made no reply, and Antony, too, was dumb. Finding the attempt to start a conversation ineffectual, Captain Seth relapsed into silence. After several applications to the case-bottle, the Captain found his tongue again.

"Martha 's with her, I suppose?"

"Yes," replied the little ship-chandler.

"She's a good gel, is Martha!"

Amos nodded. The Captain leaned towards him, and whispered *in alto*,

"As soon as ever the little one comes round, Martha and we'll get spliced for good—if *you're* no objection, father?"

Amos had certainly no objection, as the Captain well knew, for the engagement had been settled long ago. So he only smiled, and reached out his hand. The Captain took it, and, breathing heavily with delight, gave it a filial squeeze. Then they all looked at one another, and listened again for a sound from the room above.

So the night wore on. They were sociable, but very silent. Towards midnight Captain Seth, who had been looking thoughtfully at the clock, ventured the following remark:

"It's just a year ago to-night, father, since the strange Cap'n came to Bartlepool."

"I wish he'd never come at sal, bad luck to him!" said Antony Reilly. "If she'd never seen *him*, the darlint wouldn't be lying *there!*"

"He is not to blame for that," exclaimed Amos. "Don't forget, Antony, that we are all under obligations to him. In my opinion, at any rate, he is a noble fellow."

"You 're right, Amos," was the reply, while the speaker's kindly face shone with delight. "He's the right sort, or *she'd* never have thought so much of him; and as for me, I'm an ould rogue, and I 'm always abusing them I like the best myself, by that token. Here's his health, thin, whoever he is!"

He lifted the glass to his lips, and was about to drink, when his eyes became fixed and fascinated, his hand frozen as it grasped the cup, and with jaw dropping, he stared wildly at vacancy, or so it seemed. He was seated facing the room-door, while Amos Parr and the Captain had their backs to it and faced him.

"Saints preserve us!" he gasped; "look there!" and he pointed with his hand.

Turning quickly, the others could hardly repress a cry of terror; for there, standing inside the doorway, arrayed just as he had been on his first ghostly visitation to that house, was the strange Captain himself!

II.—PHILIP JANSEN.

While he stood looking at them and smiling, the hands of the clock pointed to midnight, and the cuckoo went through his suffocating struggle to get out, with twelve wiry gasps and throbs.

"A merry Christmas!" he said, taking off his hat and approaching the fire.

Despite his astonishment, Antony had the presence of mind to think of the invalid, and to dread the shock which the sound of *that* voice might bring to her.

"Spake low, for the love of God!" he whispered, creeping towards the new comer. "Is it yourself, or your ghost?"

"My substantial self," was the reply. "Touch me, feel me, if you doubt, old friend. Once more, a merry Christmas!"

So saying, he offered his hand all round. Surprised and startled as they were, they could not fail to be struck by a peculiar change in him. His face was bright, his eyes happy, merry even, and his manner all kindly warmth. He put his hand on the little ship-chandler's shoulder, and looked at him with a smile; he wrung Antony's hand, and he was quite effusive with even Captain Seth.

Suddenly, however, their embarrassment, and the nervous looks they cast towards the staircase, seemed to strike him

"But what is the matter? Why do you all look so gloomy—at such a time, too? Nothing hath happened, I trust. No one is—ill?"

"Spake low, Captain," answered Antony. "The fact is, we 're in thrubble. There 's one up there lying sick in bed."

"Not—not Mabel?" exclaimed Vanderdecken; and all the brightness passed from his face in a moment.

"Yes, Mabel," replied Amos Parr. "The poor child hath had a fever, and we feared that we should lose her; nor do we know yet if she will live or die!"

With a loud cry of pain, Vanderdecken sank into a chair. His face was as white as death, and he trembled like a leaf.

"O God!" he murmured, as if to himself. "If I have come too late!"

Presently recovering himself, he questioned them of all that had occurred since his departure. They told him of her great trouble, her silent musings, her gradual wasting away, until the fever came and clutched her; and as they spoke, they saw the tears coursing silently down the face that had once seemed so cold and stern.

Then, in answer to their questions, he told them something of his own fortunes.

He had led a wild life, as they no doubt guessed, and had been concerned in many a reckless deed. Having some money of his own, acquired in the infamous slave trade, he had fitted out a vessel in the West Indies, and shipping a degenerate crew, had plundered vessels of all nations. His name had soon become known, and a price was put upon his head. Finally, in a fight with a ship of war, his vessel had been sunk, and he himself, by a miracle, had escaped with life. Returning to his own country, he had been recognised and almost captured, but he had managed by a heavy bribe to persuade a merchant captain to conceal him, and to land him on the English coast Coming by accident to the house of Amos Parr, and taking his cue from the conversation of his entertainers, he had given his name as that of Vanderdecken to which he had no claim whatever.

His true name name, he said, was Philip Janson.

Directly he mentioned it, he saw that it was familiar to them,—as, indeed, it was to most men in those days, as that of one of the most desperate and successful privateers who ever harried the high seas

As he made these confessions, he saw that they regarded him with fresh suspicion and alarm.

Then he told them that for many a long day he had loathed his mode of life, and had dreamed of changing it; but his better nature had never really triumphed, until he had learned to love Mabel Parr. Every day in her company, he said, was a fresh step towards regeneration; till at last he perceived how base and horrible, measured by her angelic purity and goodness, his character had been. Still, he had kept up communication, even while in hiding in England, with certain wild spirits of his own nation, and they had offered him the command of another vessel, then being fitted out for maritime plunder. While he was still hesitating, and the negotiations were pending, his retreat had been discovered, and the hue and cry had begun. Alarmed and desperate, he had arranged with his new crew to be taken off one night, and to sail with them right away to the Indies. Just before the night came, as those who heard him knew, he had nearly been captured; but through the aid of Antony Reilly he had succeeded in evading his pursuers, and had escaped to the Dutch ship.

When he had got thus far with his narration, he paused, and an awkward silence followed. At last he said, addressing Amos:

"And now, with God's blessing, I have returned. My wanderings are over, and if God spares your foster-daughter, she may now become my wife."

Amos did not reply; he was too shocked and alarmed at all he had heard. Captain Seth sat gloomily scowling. But Antony, who was nothing if not outspoken, looked firmly at the strange Captain, and said with decision:

"*Your* wife, is it? No, no, man alive, that 'll never be. Why, it's nothing but a say-pirate you are, and sure some day, if you're not drownded, you'll be hanging in chains for your sins! Get along from this house like a dacent man, and don't be afther bringing more trouble. The poor child shall never know that ye ever came back."





DRAWN BY R. C. WOODVILLE. ENGRAVED BY W. EBENEZER.

LOST AT THE WOOL

Philip Vanderdecken—or rather Philip Jansen, as we must now call him—gave no sign of annoyance at this tirade, which was spoken under breath; on the contrary, he inclined his head sadly, and seemed to acquiesce in it. But his look was so patient, his manner was so sad and regretful, that both Antony and Amos were deeply touched.

"If I thought that my love would bring her sorrow," he replied, "I would do as you say; for it is not too late. But alas! it would be very hard. For many a long month, night time and day time, I have been dreaming of an hour of meeting. I know I am not worthy of her; indeed, no man is; but I have tried to be, I have sought to leave my past life behind me, and to atone."

"Let me put it to yourself," said Antony, soothingly, "and yo'll see the sinse of it, tho' ye *are* a Dutchman. Even were ye a dacent man (God forgive me for miscalling ye!) the thieves of the world are against ye. Grant you saw the darlint again, and I'm not saying she wouldn't be *glad* to see ye; what thin? It would only be lifting of the poor colleen up, to break her heart more aisily by-and-by; for when they came afther ye and caught ye, and took ye may be to your death, sure wouldn't it kill her entirely, just as she was coming round."

"But I am a free man," said Jansen, eagerly.

"What do you mane?"

Without replying, he drew from his breast a parchment, attached to which was some kind of an official seal; unrolling it, he handed it to Antony, who, after staring at it in a puzzled way for some minutes, handed it on to Amos Parr.

"It's some haythen gibberish -divil a word can I read."

"Nor I, Sir," said Amos, gently.

"That is a free pardon from the Government of Holland to the man outlawed under the name of Philip Jansen, in consideration of the discovery and yielding up of certain treasure in the Indian seas, and for his services on board the troop-ship Jan Brock, where, as a common seaman, at the naval battle of Scula, he saved the life of the Dutch Admiral."

Then, while they gazed at him in wonder, he quietly continued:

"When I left this place, flying for life, it was with no intention of resuming my former career. My only wish was to die in some honourable service. Refusing the command of the ship, at no little peril, I quitted my comrades at a Danish port; thence, disguised, I made my way to Holland, and, under a new name, entered the fleet as an able seamen. I was so far fortunate as to see active battle at once; and caring nothing for my life, nay, craving indeed to lose it, volunteered for every desperate service. My promotion was already certain, when, in a terrible engagement, when we were boarded by the enemy, I saved the Admiral's life at the risk of my own. I returned to Amsterdam in the Admiral's ship, but was there recognised, arrested, and thrown into prison. It would have gone ill with me, had the Admiral been a less grateful man; as it was, my fate was for some months uncertain: but at the end of this autumn I was taken secretly before the authorities, and interrogated concerning certain treasure hidden by me and my former comrades in one of the smaller West Indian Islands. I replied that I knew the place well, and would yield up every fraction of an enormous treasure, -if I received a pardon. Finally, by the Admiral's intercession, my terms were granted, with this condition, that I should quit Holland for ever. There is little more to add. Guided by me, the authorities secured the treasure, and I was suffered to depart."

III.—"LOVE ME FOR EVER!"

As Jansen finished his narration, the voice of Martha was heard calling up stairs, and Amos Parr hastened to the sick-room.

In about a quarter of an hour he returned, looking very anxious. Mabel, he said, was strangely agitated. Though it was impossible that she could have heard a sound from below to awaken her suspicions, she was full of a wild presentiment that her lover was near, in the flesh or in the spirit, and that she would see him soon. It was useless to argue with her, or to attempt to soothe her. She was like a creature under mesmeric conditions, conscious of some secret influence from the person of her lover.

Greatly agitated, Jansen would have gone to her at once, but they would not suffer it. The shock of his sudden appearance might, they thought, be fatal to her. At their eager solicitation, he left the house to seek another lodging,—first making them promise to send for him, should the invalid's condition cause any further alarm.

He found shelter in a house close by, where he waited impatiently for news of his beloved.

Very early the next morning, he received a message asking him to return to the ship-chandler's dwelling.

He found Amos Parr and Antony Reilly, in eager consultation with the old leech, in the outer kitchen. Mabel had spent a restless night, and still remained under the impression that her lover was close at hand, or coming to her. Her condition was so critical, her excitement so dangerous, that they had determined, under the leech's advice, to let her know the truth—in the faint hope of saving her life.

"Gladness seldom kills," said the leech. "This trouble hath been in the maiden's mind for long, and threatens still to destroy her. Let her see the gentleman, and leave the rest to God."

Antony was sent up to break the joyful news. He did it so clumsily, yet so tenderly, that she suspected him at once. When he hinted to her that her lover lived, and was perhaps coming to her, her face shone like an angel's, full of rapturous life and hope. Then Philip crept in, and with a cry of joy she laid her sobbing face upon his breast.

"I knew it!" she cried, looking up at him through her tears. "God is good, and He hath heard my prayers. O, Philip! my love!—and have you come at last?"

The bells of Christmas-tide rang out joyfully, answering her happy cry.

And now, our tale is almost told—our simple carol of Love is almost sung.

The old leech was right—gladness quickens, instead of killing; and from the moment of her lover's appearance Mabel Parr began to recover health and strength. Before many days had passed, she had left her bed, and had walked out into the sun upon her lover's arm.

Then, in that happy time, he told her everything that he had already told her friends and more for her own ear, of hopes and dreams and prayers, by which his struggle for redemption was made holy, and his troubled heart made strong. She, in her turn, told him of her sufferings, of her nightly prayers for him, and of that terrible Dream wherein she had seemed to go forth to save him, out upon the lonely Deep.

"And you are not Philip Vanderdecken," she said, looking up at him and sweetly smiling, "but my Philip still. O Philip, was it all only a dream?"

He kissed her tenderly.

"A dream, and no dream," he replied, "for did it not foreshadow the living truth? My life was even as *his*, my doom no fairer, since, until your love redeemed me, I was truly outcast and unblest. And you love me, Mabel?"

"Ah, yes!—Dear Philip, what can I do to make you blest indeed?"

He raised his eyes heavenward, and they were dim with joyful tears.

"Love me for ever!" he said.

His prayer rose to Heaven, where it was heard. The glad earth echoed it, the deep sea intoned it, all things that live and love murmured their answer to it. And so, her Dream had its sweet fulfilment, and he, through Love, was saved; for Love alone of all things is eternal, and Life and Death are only the shadows of a Dream.

AT THE SIGN OF THE GREEN DRAGON.

BY W. W. FENN.

An old-fashioned country town, deep in the heart of the Midlands, the best days of which, if it ever had any days deserving a superlative, have long passed;—a town that could never really have been more than a large village, but which, being situated on one of the great northern roads, was once, by reason of the coaching traffic on that highway, a place notable for changing horses, a town that dwindled, even in spite of this advantage, but which, when railways managed just to avoid it by a few miles on either hand, seemed to shrivel up and die, as it were, of inanition; the grass-grown market-place and single straggling street, the ancient mouldering foundation of almshouses, the many tenantless dwellings and closed shops, the small, long-unrenovated church and parsonage, all spoke of desertion. But it was in the large gable-ended, ruinous old inn, standing on the outskirts of the town, that the story of the past was most plainly to be read. The Green Dragon looked like a page from the "book of fate," where we may see "how chances mock, and change fills the cup of alteration with divers liquors," for this used to be the great posting-house in those palmy days of the road, and where there was stabling for some two hundred horses, and where the cry of, "The next pair out" was as familiar on the air all through the day and night as the church bells on Sundays.

"But now, alas! how is it with The Green Dragon after more than fifty years? for it is fully that time since these dazed eyes gazed on your swinging sign-board, your ample courtyard, with outside stairs and galleries, your ponderous chimney-stacks, your gabled roofs, and quaint leaded casements. Yes, and nearly seventy since I first remember distinctly any of these, your once familiar features.

"And so we meet again, old friend—parent, I might almost call you, for in yonder high-up dormitory, in the northern face of the quadrangle, I was born; and, since I never knew a human parent's love, your inanimate old timbers and rifted masonry are more to me, and seem to have more kindred with my ending life than if were possible for mortal flesh and blood to have. Faith, there is little to choose between us now. Desolate, deserted, ruined, is our condition both; and as the moon looks down on this mild and strangely genial Christmas Eve upon our common lot, my heart goes out to you—drawn towards you by a feeling not easily defined. If shelter may yet be found beneath your crumbling roof, I would fain seek it for this night, and would willingly stretch these weary old bones on your roughest plank."

Thus ruminated, thus almost spoke, an aged but still stalwart man who, having slowly traversed the street, and for a good hour or two ere twilight fell and the moon rose, wandered round about the house, at length passed beneath the ruined gateway and up one of the creaking flights of stairs. By this time, as if in friendly welcome, the moonbeams, bursting in at many a rift and aperture in roof, wall, or window, fell broad and clear at intervals across his path. Or, glinting here and there on splintered panel and broken balustrade, cast the deep recesses of room or passage into such stretches of ominous and ghostly shadow as might have made a stranger pause. But the slow footstep which now sent ringing, booming echoes up and down the empty corridors and scared the world of vermin life that held high revel in the deserted habitation, was not the footstep of a stranger. It took its way familiarly from room to room, and floor to floor, until it came to one high-up attic in the roof. The door was ajar, and for the first time in his wandering about the place, the old man started, and shrank back apace, for he fancied that he had caught sight of a woman's figure suddenly retreating into the apartment. It was as if she might have been in front of him, although he had not observed her until that moment. He rubbed his eyes as if distrusting them; then calling out "Is anybody there?" advanced and pushed the door wide open. But no one answered, and there was no sign of life within the room.

"'Twas but a flickering of the light," he thought; "my sight is easily deceived now."

The chamber was a bare, blank place enough, yet wearing some appearance of recent care and occupation, and looking as if the ruthless hand of Time had been laid more gently there than elsewhere in the house. The walls were dry, the window sound, and the low, heavy-beamed ceiling but little cracked. The broad mantel-shelf and certain panelling on either side the fire-place, with an odd old-fashioned chair or two, a rickety table and a straight-backed kind of settle, helped to suggest a certain air of comfort where all else was dilapidation and decay. A threadbare rug, too, still lay upon the uneven hearth, and as the friendly moonlight streaming in at the casement showed the old man these and other minor details, he entered and closed the door behind him.

"Yes—here it was I first saw the light," he presently murmured as he gazed around, "and here not unwillingly would I let my eyelids close for ever on this world. A home it was to me in the beginning—a home it still appears. It is as if the long interval had never been, and I can once more see myself, the urchin, clambering upon the window-seat to watch the doings with the horses in the court below."

He walked up to the casement and looked out, and his tall figure, with its flowing snowy beard, as it stood motionless in the flood of moonlight, might have been that of some weird visitor from the realm of dreams and shadows, so ghost-like did it look! For many minutes thus he stood; then, suddenly turning, he started again, for again he felt half-conscious of some other presence in the dim obscurity of the further end of the room; but the idea was gone almost as soon as formed, and passing slowly to and fro, he spent a long while examining each nook and corner in an absent dreamy state, until, at length wrapping the folds of his long military sort of loose grey coat around him, he stretched himself upon the settle, and seemed to fall asleep. Hours may have gone by, he never knew how many; and whether he dreamt at all, or whether from strong association merely, the visioned outline of his life came back before his mind with the vivid reality of a dream signifies little; but there it was, and what he saw and felt and acted was surely a shadowing forth of the irrevocable past.

First, as he had said, he beheld himself as a baby boy scampering about the nursery and eagerly watching the active life in the stables beneath the window. With him too, often, as a little girl, some five years older than himself, who, for the most time being the only other occupant of the room, acts as his nurse and guardian romps with him, plays with him at his games, carries him on her back, and always shows the tenderest and lovingest regard for all his little wilful ways and fancies. Then the summer has come, and they are in the fields together gathering the buttercups and making loops of daisy chains to jump across, rifling the hedges and weaving wreaths of wild flowers, with which, having perched her on a bank, he crowns her, and, clapping his pudgy palms, looks at her admiringly, and calls her his queen, flings his arms round her neck, kisses her, tumbles her over in the grass, and then, with delighted frantic whoops and shouts, dances round her in wild delight. By-and-by, the two, a little older, are side by side on the deep window-seat, and she is helping him with his lessons, and where he cannot make the figures on the slate come right, she takes the pencil from his little fist, and shows him on his dumpy fingers how to count, and having made the numbers out, sets them down, and makes him copy them. Now the great letters from the spelling book are conned, words are formed, and sentences built up; she, reading aloud, he repeating slowly but untiringly; and if by any chance she has to scold for inattention, and grief is the result, she presently relents, and dries his eyes with her clustering curls, putting her pretty face close to his, soothing and petting always.

Following this and many another air-drawn picture of his childish life, the old man saw a gloomy blank when, with but few and distant intervals, he was separated from his loving little friend and playmate—his cousin, as he learned by this time to know she was. He is at school, beginning to buffet with that world in miniature, and, if holding his own manfully, does so with the constant thought of what she will say; the thought of her sweet, bright face always keeping him steadily to his work in the right path.

A final dreary interval of absence and he, a boy of fourteen, is back at the old inn for good. It looks much smaller than it used, and the high-up attic has shrunk, as it seems, into a mere cupboard. Moreover, the old air of prosperity is gone—there is less custom, fewer horses in the stables, and many of the rooms are shut up entirely. His uncle, who was the landlord of the house, is dead, and that stern, morose woman, his uncle's second wife, is harsher and sterner than ever. Were it not for the radiant, sunny presence of the girl he would feel the altered aspect of the place unbearable. Even with her there, he finds his old home no longer the cheery, happy haven he once had thought it, for she, too, is altered, not only from the fact of her having shot up into a graceful, beautiful woman, as she looks to him; but because there seems to have opened a great gulf between them, and at times her bright face grows clouded, and that dimpling smile of hers is far less frequent. Their old relations are changed somehow, not because she is less kind, not because he is less fond; but the years have wrought that inevitable change which from his young standpoint he cannot comprehend. Is there another reason still? and can it have anything to do with that handsome, dashing, bold-looking, swaggering young squire, who is for ever riding over on his high-mettled nag, and stretching out his booted legs before the parlour fire, and talking so familiarly with the sweet cousin?

Anyway, it was a sad, sad stretch or time that now passed before the mind's eye of the solitary old man, still sitting motionless in the waning moonlight high up in the attic of the ruinous Green Dragon.

He sees himself put to menial offices, to dreary drudgery about the stables and outhouses; and, weary and resentful by turns, he recalls more vividly than all one particular day, when, as a stripling of seventeen, he flings himself at his cousin's feet, and heart-sick, madly jealous of that interloping young Squire, he calls upon her to reciprocate the love he bears her. He is put aside, spurned contemptuously, as it seems to him in his blind madness. He rushes out of the house, and hurries away to a lonely part of the road by which he knows that man goes home. It is at the foot of a steep hill, up which the horse is always allowed to walk slowly, and there, armed with a heavy stick, he lies in wait behind a hedge till nightfall. Just as his victim reins up, and proceeds as usual at a foot pace beneath the gloomy trees, the lad springs out upon him, and with one blow from behind on his head brings him senseless off the horse, which gallops away. More blows are struck, more direful vengeance wreaked upon the senseless man on the ground, and by the time day breaks that criminal and fierce young spirit is miles away upon a southern road. He has no clear recollection of how it came about or how he got there, save that, after days and days of weary walking, he finds himself on the outskirts of a large town, where there are bastions and fortifications, and troops marching hither and thither with colours flying and drums beating, and that, speedily being accosted by some of the lounging soldiery about the place, he enlists, and, under another name, is soon himself marching to and fro, like the rest, and with a reckless angry pride in his heart that sweeps all other feelings out of it. Regiment after regiment depart, and he knows they are going to fight the French in Spain. When his turn comes, as it does ere long, he experiences a wild joy at the thought of quitting his country and leaving no trace of himself behind; whilst the prospect of flinging himself into the forefront of battle has a fierce charm in it above all else. Beyond the names of Wellington and Bonaparte, he, like the thousands who are his comrades, knows little or nothing of the why or wherefore of the mighty strife now going on. The unquenchable fighting instinct in man's nature is roused within him, and long before he comes face to face with the enemy he has embraced the soldier's career with a hearty love for it, which by degrees masters and obliterates nearly every remembrance of that other love which had driven him into this. Such a spirit, such enthusiasm, can but bring their reward. Promotion follows swiftly, and ere Waterloo is fought he has already gained an ensign's commission; whilst by the time the Peace of Paris is finally ratified, and the British troops are garrisoned at home again, he holds the brevet rank of Major.

The old man stirred uneasily on his rough couch when the air-drawn panorama of those bygone days reached this point. Soon, however, he lapsed back into complete quiescence; the long peace that followed, which was but as a blank upon the canvas passing before him, seemed to bring with it bodily repose to the grim old warrior, and he slept profoundly. But he still dreamed on, the sequence of his life but little broken.

There is the idleness and inactivity subsequent to the subsidence of "war's alarms," with no outlet for the still ardent energies of such as he. His soldier's pay is all he has—he feels the want of means preclude all further upward steps. The military calling is at a discount in the people's mind. Resentment once more gets the upper hand of him, and his dare-devil instincts, unsubdued, burst out again in a wild passion for play. The facilities for its indulgence at this epoch are, alas! too easy, and he falls, never to rise again. Broken in purse, but not in spirit, he quits the service and his country, with nothing but the bare value of his commission in his pocket.

(*Continued on page 34.*)

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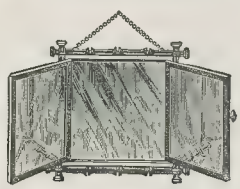


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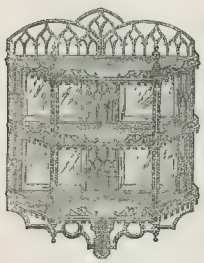
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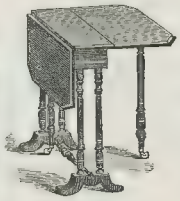
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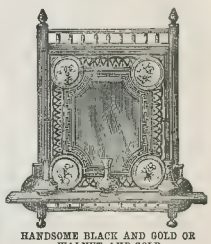
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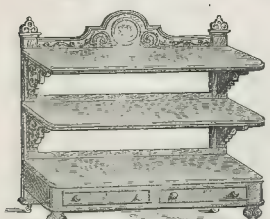
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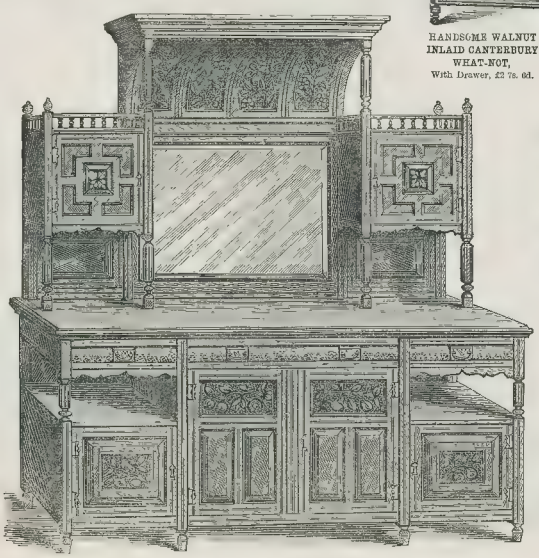
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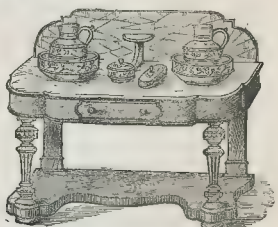
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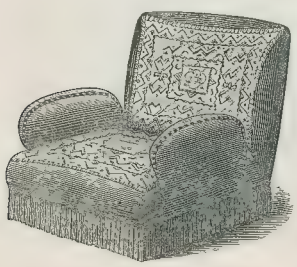
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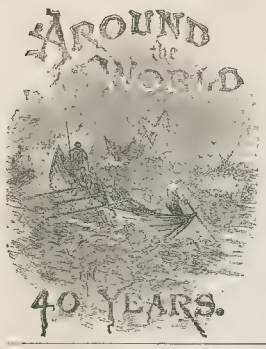

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CHRISTMAS IN TOPSYTURVYDOM



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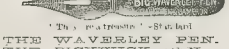
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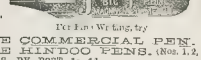
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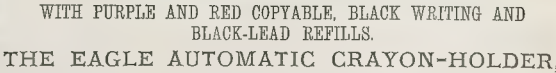
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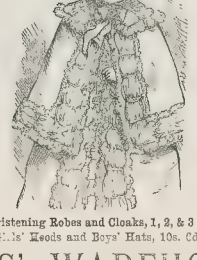
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If your hair is turning grey or white, or falling off, use THE MEXICAN HAIR RENEWER; for it will positively restore, in every case, grey or white hair to its original colour, without leaving the disagreeable smell of most "Restorers." It makes the hair charmingly beautiful, as well as promoting the growth of the hair on bald spots, where the glands are not decayed.
This preparation has never been known to fail in restoring the hair to its natural colour and gloss in from eight to twelve days.
It may be had of any respectable Chemist, Perfumer, or Dealer in Toilet Articles in the Kingdom, at 3s. 6d. per Bottle In care the dealer has not "The Mexican Hair Renewer" in stock and will not procure it for you, it will be sent direct by rail, carriage-paid, on receipt of 4s. in stamps, to any part of England.

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WHAT REACTIFIES THE HAIR?
What gives luxuriance to each tress,
And pleases each one's fancies?
What adds a charm of perfect grace,
And Nature's gift enhances?
What gives a bright and beauteous gloss,
And what says each reviewer?
"That quite supreme It is the use
Of 'THE MEXICAN HAIR RENEWER!'"
What gives luxuriance to each tress,
And makes it bright and glowing?
What keeps it free from dandruff, too,
And healthy in its growing?
What does such wonders? Ask the press,
Ans. what says each reviewer?
"That none or equal or approach
'THE MEXICAN HAIR RENEWER!'"
What gives luxuriance to each tress,
Like some bright halo beaming?
What makes the hair a perfect mass
Of splendid ringlets teeming?
What gives profusion in excess?
Why, what says each reviewer?
"The ch ared purpa ation is
'THE MEXICAN HAIR RENEWER!'"
What gives luxuriance to each tress,
And makes it so delightful?
Because to speak the honest truth
Is only just and rightful.
What say the people and the press,
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"That most superb for ladies' use
Is 'THE MEXICAN HAIR RENEWER!'"

THE MEXICAN HAIR RENEWER
has gained for itself the highest reputation, and a decided preference over all other "hair dressings"—it may be relied on as the very best known to chemistry for restoring the natural colour to the hair, and causing new hair to grow on bald spots, unless the hair glands are decayed.
Messrs. Wm. Hayes and Co., Chemists, 12, Grafton-street, Dublin, write:—"We are recommending THE MEXICAN HAIR RENEWER to all our customers as the best of the kind, as we have been told by several of our friends who tried it that it has a wonderful effect in restoring and strengthening their Hair"

THE MEXICAN HAIR RENEWER.
AN IMPORTANT QUESTION FOR LADIES
Would you have luxuriant hair,
Beautiful, and rich, and rare,
Would you have it soft and bright,
And attractive to the sight?
This you really can produce
If you put in constant use
THE MEXICAN HAIR RENEWER.
The hair it strengthens and preserves,
And thus a double purpose serves;
It beautifies—improves it, too,
And gives it a most charming hue,
And thus in each essential way,
It public favour gains each day—
THE MEXICAN HAIR RENEWER.
If a single thread of hair
Of a greyish tint is there,
This "Renewer" will restore
All its colour as before,
And thus it is that vast renown
Does daily now its virtues crown—
THE MEXICAN HAIR RENEWER.
No matter whether faded grey,
Or falling like the leaves away,
It will renew the human hair,
And make it like itself appear:
It will revive it, beautify,
And every accident wish supply—
THE MEXICAN HAIR RENEWER.

THE MEXICAN HAIR RENEWER.
The constitution of the person and the condition of the scalp have much to do with the length of time it requires for new hair to grow, also thin or thick hair will depend much upon the vital force remaining in the hair-glands. New hairs are first seen to start around the margin of the bald spots near the permanent hair, and extending upwards until the spots are covered more or less thickly with fine short hair. Excessive brushing should be guarded against as soon as the small hairs make their appearance; but the scalp may be sponged with rain water to advantage occasionally. The scalp may be pressed and moved on the bone by the finger ends, which quickens the circulation and softens the spots which have remained long bald.

THE MEXICAN HAIR RENEWER.
When the hair is weak and faded,
Like the autumn leaves that fall,
Then is felt that saddest'd feeling
Which does every heart enthrall,
Then we look for some specific
To arrest it on its way,
And THE MEXICAN HAIR RENEWER
Bids it like enchantment stay.
It arrests decaying progress:
Though the hair is thin and grey
It will strengthen and improve it,
And work wonders day by day.
It restores the colour,
And brings back its beauty, too,
For THE MEXICAN HAIR RENEWER
Makes it look both fresh and new.
What's the greatest hair restorer
That the present age can show,
What produces wonders daily,
Which the world at large should know?
Why, THE MEXICAN HAIR RENEWER
Eminently stands the first;
Thus its fame by countless thousands
Day by day is now rehearsed.
What beauties, improves, and strengthens
Human hair of every age?
Why, this famous great restorer
With the ladies is the rage.
And THE MEXICAN HAIR RENEWER
Is the very best in use,
For luxuriant tresses always
Do its magic powers produce.

THE WORDS "THE MEXICAN HAIR RENEWER" are a Trade-Mark; and the public will please see the words are on every case surrounding the Bottle, and the name is blown in the bottle.
The Mexican Hair Renewer. Price 3s. 6d. Directions in German French, and Spanish.
May be had of most respectable Dealers in all parts of the World.
Sold Wholesale by the ANGLO-AMERICAN DRUG COMPANY, Limited, Farringdon road, London



AT THE SIGN OF THE GREEN DRAGON.

(*Continued from page 28*).

Away in the Far West he finds for many years a sort of compensation, and as one of the many pioneers of civilisation he does more good service yet, in the peaceful battle which man is waging with wilderness and primeval forest. But more years go by—it matters little how they are spent without aim or purpose, until, cast down by sickness and the increasing weight of time, a hungry longing to revisit his first and only home takes possession of him.

And here at length he is, of all nights in the year, on Christmas Eve, but, as yet, with little of the holy influence of the time in his heart; nevertheless, its spirit is abroad, and all around him in the familiar Green Dragon. That girl-child's face with the golden hair, the guardian angel of the house, is now again the moving figure in his vision, and looks down upon him, he fancies, as he sleeps, obscuring all the intervening years, bringing him back to happy childhood, the only happiness he has ever known. She seems to be bending over his little crib and watching him as she used to do in those far-off days, when, loth to wake him rudely, she would do so with a gentle kiss. He feels her lips upon his forehead, and starts up from the old settle, dazed, confused, but suddenly conscious that he is not alone!

A wild exclamation, half in astonishment, half in terror, burst from him. It was echoed by a woman standing within a yard of him. The bright morning sun flooded the room with a dazzling light, and the man and woman remained for a while gazing at each other in dumb amazement. She was as old as he at least, but not at all infirm, and still bearing traces of exceeding beauty—a handsome-featured, comely old dame, with thick snowy hair, smoothly brushed beneath as snowy a cap surmounted by a neat kind of old-world beaver bonnet. A rough warm coloured cloak fell from her shoulders, displaying beneath it a dull grey gown and coarse whity-brown apron, the whole dress having the air of a regulated uniformity.

She was the first to speak. Advancing a step, she said in a tremulous hesitating voice, which, considering her age, had in it a singularly youthful ring—

"Can it be? Is it? No, surely, not Johnnie?"

She put out her hand as if to settle her doubt by touch. But the thin, well-shaped, albeit bony, fingers did not reach far enough, and she advanced another step. The old man here stretched forth his hand and grasped hers. It was his left and her right, and so they stood in silence just for one moment more, looking at each other strangely, doubtfully. His gaze was steady, searching, and seemed to carry conviction with it, for suddenly he exclaimed,

"Great God! I had never hoped for this, Mary—for Mary, and none other, it is. Bless you, bless you, dear heart!" and, going forward, he fell upon her neck. "I had never hoped for this," he went on hurriedly, in a hoarse and guttural voice, as he looked up again in her face; "I dared not ask if you were still —still here. But I know you now—your eyes, your voice—among a thousand!"

"Dear, dear," she cried; "to think of this—for you, Johnnie, to be living, and I—we all here—never to have heard of you, all for wellnigh these fifty years, I suppose! Where have you been, man? How came you back?—and never to have written a word. Dear me, dear me! How wonderful, how marvellous, are the ways of God!"

Then her tears choked her, and she completely broke down. There was another and a longer silence. Again she was the first to break it, for, as they sat side by side now upon the settle, the man had buried his face between his roughened palms and was sobbing like a child.

"Tell me, dear Johnnie, how you came here—up into this room," she began. "I have kept it a bit tidy as best I could, all for your sake—because I loved it for your sake—because it seemed to me to be the only place where I could sometimes think of you happily and feel as I used to feel when we were together here as children. The property is in Chancery, they say—no one minds it now, or who comes or goes the inn never prospered after poor father died, and then the railroads took away all the custom—and so I have tried to keep this corner at least from the general ruin. Daily, almost, I come up to have a look at it, and this morning, before church, I come and find a man asleep on this bench. At first I did not notice you, and then as I stood wondering who you could be, and was beginning to fancy somehow I ought to know you, you awoke and stood up, and then I did know you!"

Raising his face, but without looking at her, he answered, softly—

"Ay, ay—I understand what it was now—your influence, your presence has hallowed this room, and it was your spirit which guided and kept me here, and which more than once I seemed to think I saw."

He drooped his head again, took her hand, and pressing it to his lips, sobbed still.

"There, there," she continued soothingly, patting him on the shoulder, and then folding her arm affectionately round his neck, just as she had done a thousand times before—all those years ago! He was again to her the wayward, fretful child, and she him the loving, tender nurse. Their hearts at that moment were utterly unconscious of the long separation there had been between them. They were entirely oblivious of the lapse. It was truly as if it had never been. As on the threshold of life they had sat under that selfsame roof, so sat they now at its close—its misgivings, doubts, perplexities, errors—all but its mystery, swept away.

Long was it before their talk became coherent, or the one heard from the other, briefly and brokenly, anything of how each had fared. The distant sound of the church bells pealing forth for the Christmas morning service was the first thing which recalled these two old dreamers from their vivid past to, as it seemed to them, the far more hazy present.

"You will come, Johnnie," said the woman, rising, "you will come with me and give praise and thanks to God for this and all his mercies."

The old man shook his head.

"How dare I show my face, Mary? Remember what I did the night I ran away. As you have recognised me, others may. I have never dared to think or ask what was the end of that deed."

He looked at his old love with pitiful, appealing eyes.

"Johnnie, Johnnie!" she broke in, "take comfort. God was merciful to you then, as always. The young Squire was not dead when he was found by the roadside, and lived to pass away in the natural course of time, though perhaps with shortened days."

"I thank God!" exclaimed the old soldier, grasping her left hand and looking at the third finger eagerly; "and still you did not marry him? Thank God, again and again!"

"No, foolish boy," she answered, "nor never should. He was too much above our station, let alone many other reasons."

Once more the old man fell upon her neck, weeping; the fierce strong passionate heart now utterly subdued and contrite.

"I will go with you, Mary, to church," he presently said, drawing himself up to his full height, and the two went forth slowly through the creaking passages of the old inn, and down the broken stairs, and out on to the bright sunlit highway.

Amidst the little congregation of simple folk who offered up their humble prayers and joined "the pealing anthem as it swelled the note of praise" on that Christmas morning in the decayed old church, there were few more earnest, thankful-hearted worshippers than the tall, grim, grey-bearded stranger standing just within the porch, and that neat, comely old dame who occupied the sixth seat of the almshouse pew.

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RIVAL BELLES.—LOST AND WON.

Two bosom friends were Prue and Nell—
Each beautiful in her degree,
So winning both, 'twere hard to tell
Which was the lovelier she.

Prue fair as day when not a trace
Of cloud in summer sky is seen;
And Nellie with the tender grace
Of twilight's hour serene.

As kindred odours interfuse,
As concord dwells in varied tones,
And each gay flower from blended hues
Diviner beauty owns,—

So with sweet difference were they blent
That in one mould they fain must run:
Each being to each the complement—
Two hearts close fused in one.

So seemed it once. And yet, alas!
The firmest friendships melt away,
And into filmiest vapour pass,
Beneath Love's fervent ray.

A young Adonis came their way,
One bearing an illustrious name;
A warrior bold, yet blithely gay,
Loud-heralded by Fame.

Soon like their shadow he became,
Close following wheresoe'er they went
To church or rout, to him the same—
His footsteps thither bent.

Long time no difference could be seen
In his devotion to the two;
None knew which was his Beauty's Queen,
If Nellie 'twas, or Prue.

For all that anybody knew
Their love-lorn victim, nothing loth,
They by twin magnetism drew
Conjointly to them both.

What of the ladies all the while?
Charmed by this gallant, brave and gay,
Did Love alike both hearts beguile
More deeply day by day?

Yes. When at length he breathed his vows
To Prue, who listened with delight,
Then sombre grew sweet Nellie's brows,
For in her heart was night.

Where was the friendship that so long
Had bound them heart to heart?
Snapt was the link so seeming strong,
And these two stood apart.

In angry mood sat Nellie there,
A prey to anguish as she glanced
To where, apart, the happy pair
Stood in their bliss entranced.

Cheer up, thou lone one! nor believe
That all life's joys are vanished quite!
Why sit you watching (while you grieve)
The tantalising sight?

The day will come, Miss Nell, when you,
Ignoring this unpleasant time,
Will be again warm friend with Prue,
As in your early prime.

For Time, I dare to prophesy,
Will seat you yet on Love's own throne;
And you will treasure by-and-by
A heart that 's all your own!—JOHN LATEY.

"*HE* STOOPS TO CONQUER."

Eyes saying more than eyes say when they 're glist'ning;
Eyes upon which the lids languidly fall;
'Tis to their *whisper* he 's leaning and list'ning,
Not to the lips that say—nothing at all!
Nothing? Well, simply what comes to the surface;
A *souffle* of gossip; Society froth:
But, pleasant *his* voice is, and oh, to read *her* face,
And perish, is bliss to the rapturous moth.

He conqueror? look at the suppliant! oh, when 'll he
Recover the wish to walk upright again?
This playing-fields' idol, this hero (at Henley),
'Tis to their *whisper* he 's leaning and list'ning,
You would not suppose, as you watched the beau dawdle,
That he won his V.C. in a terrible way.
Well, he did: but, unwarned by Delilah—or Caudle,
He "gives himself" (Yankee the phrase is) "away."

The pity they feel as they furtively watch him!
The target he is for the shafts of their wit!
"A Baby like that"—say the women—"to catch him!"
The men: "It 's all over! he 's fatally hit!"
To each unwon Beauty denied is the power
To find out the charm of a conquering face:
"Alas," said the Fox, "yonder bunches are sour yet;
Of those who must eat them I pity the case."

He stoop to conquer! for "conquer" read "capture."
He came, and he saw, and—he bowed to the yoke.
She was sure he was hers, and the knowledge was rapture—
Yes, knew it (how odd!) ere the stammerer spoke.
The day is not named, but the letter Love forges
To bind her to him and to make him her slave,
You may see one fine morning, in lofty St. George's,
If somebody sends you a card for the nave.—BYRON WEBBER.

WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Here comes a sweet dear,
Her Pussy caressing,
To wish us good cheer
And each Christmas blessing.

'Tis Little Miss Muffet:
Not she famed of yore
In nursery lore,
Who sat on a tuffet
And ate curds and whey,
Until a big spider
Came crawling beside her,
And drove her away.
No, this is a new one,
A flesh-and-blood dear,
Who lives with us here;
A genuine true one,
Whose eyes look right through one,
Unknowing of fear
She scared at a spider!
Do you wish to deride her?
You know not our dear,
If you say so, 'tis clear:
Should a spider alight on her,
Think you 't would frighten her?
Without any fuss,
She would wave her hand thus,
Or blow a puff—so,
And off it would go.

Our sturdy Miss Muffet
With Boreas dares buffet.
In teppet of fur,
When winds in her teeth blow!
With hands in her muff, it
Is clear she can rough it

In stormiest weather.
She 's a hat on, or bonnet—
Which is it? and on it
A very fine feather;
Equipped for a walk
This keen frosty morning,
And utterly scorning
The cold all to pelter
But first she must talk
With Pussy a bit,
Ere young, as fit,
So there 's plenty of chatter
In pussy-cat patter,
With many a kiss
Interjected by Miss;
Her speech softly purring,
And Pussy sustaining
An answer most fit.
At least she 'll aver
'Tis well known to her
As hers is to it!

"Now Puss" that 's enough
Of fondling and purring
My cape you are furring
Jump down from my muff!"

Miss Muffet at last
Is off, walking fast.
What delight to behold her,
Glancing back o'er her shoulder,
Sweet smiling and rosy!
As onward she 's ploddug!
You darlingest Miss,
I blow you a kiss!—J. L.

The Coloured Picture.

CINDERELLA.

BY F. C. BURNAND.

Cinderella? Yes, Cinderella; not as we all know her when she had discovered the advantages of having a Fairy Godmother, but Cinderella a few weeks after her father's second marriage, when her shrewish step-mother no longer cared to conceal her dislike of her second husband's pretty little child, whose "sweet, obliging manners," says their family historian, "made those of her own daughters appear a thousand times more odious and disagreeable."

What a very pretty woman, too, Cinderella's mother must have been, for the little girl, we are told, was "the exact likeness of her mother in sweetness of temper and carriage."

Strange to say, that the chronicler to whom we are indebted for all we know about Cinderella has never once mentioned the Christian name or surname of Cinderella's father. This is the more astonishing when we come to consider that her father must have been aware of the powerful assistance he could always obtain from the good Fairy who had consented to stand as Godmother to his child. What name, too, had been bestowed on the child by her Godfathers and Godmothers in her baptism? or, by some special arrangement, was the Fairy the only Godmother present at the ceremony? If so, what did the clergyman say? and what did the clergyman's bishop say when he was, as he must have been, at some time or another, acquainted with the facts? Was the Fairy acting as Godmother under false pretenses without having informed anyone of her being a Fairy? And how did she sign the baptismal register? All these questions have yet to be answered, and many more.

Cinderella's father was "a very rich gentleman," and sincerely attached to Cinderella's mother; and yet we remain in total ignorance of his name and rank.

But truly the chronicler could not have made any honourable mention of him, as he must have been not only uxorious, but the weakest specimen of male humanity, to have allowed his sweet little daughter, the image of his late wife, to be so ill-treated that she was "forced to sleep up in a sorry garret, upon a wretched straw bed, without curtains, or anything to make her comfortable." Why did he not send her to school, or why did he not at once invoke the Fairy Godmother,—for what on earth is the use of having a fairy godmother if she is not able to help you at a pinch? The Fairy must have been friendly, or she would never have consented to undertake the trust, and "to promise and vow" a lot of things in the name of her protégée; what promise, however, her Fairyship was either not called upon to fulfil, or had too many irons in the fire to remember. My own opinion on the subject is that Cinderella's father came to no good end; that, in fact, there was some mystery about his disappearance, which was never sifted at the time, and was hushed up afterwards. Certainly this harsh treatment of Cinderella, who could not have been more than two or three years old when her father married his second wife, must have continued for years, until the unhappy but long-suffering girl was reduced to the position of a maid-of-all-work, a sort of "Marchioness," making-believe very much, with a scrap of lemon-peel and a little water in a tumbler; while the conduct of Sally Brass was represented by that of her step-mother and two sisters, who kept her in the back kitchen and rarely let her go out, except on very short errands.

Yet if Cinderella's father were a very rich man, how was it that in such an establishment as he must have kept up were there no servants to take pity on Cinderella, and even for their own profit report this "Extraordinary case of Cruelty to a Child" in the proper quarter?

The History of Cinderella has yet to be written; and as some sort of an answer to some of the above very natural queries, I herewith present my readers with a few materials for a future history of what we may term The Cinderella Family.

Cinderella's father was not a clever or high-principled man; but he started in life with a small capital, and was an uncommonly lucky man. He speculated freely, stupidly, and blindly; he took wrong advice, and always came out right; he won rubbers without skill, and with no trumps; and when everyone said that "good luck in specs was sure to be followed by bad luck in a wife," he married one of the loveliest women—most accomplished, sweetest-tempered and most fascinating women of her time.

The old adage had gone wrong; the wealthy speculator had been most fortunate in his choice.

But, alas! the truth of proverbial philosophy was to be avenged, for the charming lady died, leaving him a widower with a beautiful child.

The grief of this loss was too much for him. He took to drinking; secretly, not openly. The shewy widow of a retired tradesman, aged fifty, with two daughters, eager to get into society, made a swoop upon him; sat near him at church, met him at a watering place, listened to his weakness, and he was accumulating more and more weaknesses every day,—ministered to his wants and comforts, pretended to pet his daughter, and finally compromised him so effectually that he found himself bound to marry the widow, while consoling himself with the thought that he was doing the best for his motherless child, and ensuring a comfortable home for himself.

Before the marriage day the Fairy Godmother had called on him—coming in her private chariot drawn by cockchafers—and warned him of the consequences. He refused to listen, protested that no one had a right to interfere with his family affairs, not even the Fairy Godmother of his own child, and was so rude to her that she quitted the house in a huff, dodgeon without seeing her godchild, and wishing him bad luck as she went out, vanished, chariot and all, on a sunbeam. He married; but from that moment things went wrong. His speculations turned out failures, his expenses increased, his womenkind became overpoweringly expensive, and within two years he was in the *Gazette*, his house, plate, furniture, everything sold up, except a sum that his wife had insisted on being settled upon her at their marriage; and then, being totally unable to face difficulties, he became more attached than ever to the bottle, had frequent domestic rows of a violent character, and at last one night packed up his portmanteau, and, hoping that Cinderella would be protected by her Fairy Godmother, he sallied forth, and never reappeared as was ever heard of again—at all events, during the lifetime of his second wife.

His wife and her two daughters took to keeping, or rather letting, furnished apartments in a fashionable quarter of the town; and here it was that Cinderella, now about ten years of age, began to be very useful to them in the kitchen and parlour, also acting as maid to the girls when they wished to have their hair dressed to go to a dance or a dinner, to which they were from time to time invited by the eligible bachelors who patronised their house.

After a time they set up a boarding-house, and, by using the greatest discrimination, they managed to select the right customers, always with an eye to regaining that position in society forfeited by the loss of means, and also to a good match for both of the young women, who were now getting on in life rather too fast for their own satisfaction. Their mother had become a confirmed invalid, and was tended entirely by Cinderella, who was now able to return good for evil, and who was thus saved for a time from more menial employment.

On the death of their mother, the two daughters realised their little property, set up a small house for themselves, relegated Cinderella to the kitchen, nominally as their housekeeper (she was between fifteen and sixteen), but really as their maid-of-all-work, and did their very utmost to secure as partners for life any two of the richest or most fashionable among their numerous acquaintances who had at one time or other been their lodgers. The two sisters—the eldest's name has never transpired, but the younger was called Charlotte cultivated most assiduously professional and artistic friends, and so obtained gifts of boxes at the theatres, stalls at the Opera, and free admissions to various entertainments, which helped them considerably in laying their fashionable (but not wealthy) friends under considerable obligation to them. Poor Cinderella never went to any of these shows, and would sit at home, night after night for a whole year, and wonder what a pantomime was like, and how transformation scenes were managed, and O, how she did long to see a fairy!

She heard her sisters talk of these things when they were dressing, when they used to bitterly regret that fate had not placed them in a higher sphere of society.

"Still," said Charlotte, "we shan't do so badly, I expect, if old Frizzlewig only gets those tickets for the Royal Ball at the Palace for us."

"O, I do so hope he will!" exclaimed the elder, and before she had time to put an extra touch of powder on her nose, a knock at the door startled them, and Cinderella would have hurried down to answer it, had she not remembered that an old charwoman, to whom she had lately been very kind, had come in for the day, and had undertaken, for the consideration of 'wittles' and drink, to take the heaviest portion of the down-stair work on her expert hands. The arrival was old Frizzlewig—this was their nickname for a noble Marquis, who could not make up his mind which of the two sisters he preferred, as they both looked hunting on top of his bent, and flitted and waxed hot, so that, being a fat and foolish old nobleman, he would have done anything in his power for them, and indeed, as it was, was quite proud of his time of life, to be seen about with two such elegant and showy young women, who seemed so entirely devoted to him, and who appeared to love him with a disinterested affection beyond that known by any of his relations, including his own children. So old Frizzlewig had taken no end of trouble, had, on their account, promised his vote and interest here, there, and everywhere; had got on the right side of the Lord Chamberlain, and had procured two private tickets for the Royal Ball which was to be given at the Palace on the occasion of the Prince's coming of age.

Weren't the sisters mad with joy! Poor Cinderella, she had a time of it, I warrant you. But now that her half-sisters were really going to be launched into society—the very best society in the world—their old friends and acquaintances rallied round them, and the presents came in in cartloads, chiefly bouquets and gloves, which old Frizzlewig, rendered jealous by these attentions, presented them with real diamonds and such magnificent dresses as made Charlotte and her sister weep with delight as they embraced him, one on each side, and called him all the dears, darlings, pets, poppets, and sweet things they could think of.

The night of the ball came. You know the rest. That peacock's feather in Cinderella's hand had dropped out of a rare bird to presented to Charlotte by one of her admirers many years before. She had cherished it as being one little bit of finery. As a mere girl, and it is just at this time that the artist has taken her, when they first came to this house, she had sat up thinking of what her half-sisters were seeing at the theatre, and how they were enjoying themselves, and then the feather seemed to expand and to show her the world through its own peacock's eyes, and she would dream of possibilities and fairies, and princes, and wonder whether she should ever be anything more than what she now was; and then she would wish that she too had left the earth with her mother and gone with her into some bright land, and then she wondered what had become of her father . . . and then she dreamed she met him with her mother, and they were all then so happy . . . and then she awoke to hear her sisters ringing the front door bell, and shivered to find she had let the fire out while she was stepping up to let her sisters in. And now more than a year had passed: she was seventeen, and looked back to that dreamy time. She had ceased to wonder about theatres, but the Royal Ball—this was a new sensation! and a Prince!

But she was all alone—till her old friend the charwoman came in to say good-night. And the elderly dame stopped to chat: and, becoming very loquacious, she confided to her a charm: and this charm could compel the presence of fairy godmothers. Then suddenly there flashed across Cinderella's mind a light—faint, but still a light—of other days, bringing into relief something she had once heard—when where? Before her father's death? Yes. Something about her mother's friend the Fairy Godmother? Yes. And by a sudden, unaccountable inspiration, she jumped up and cried, "I have a Fairy Godmother. Let her appear. She has deserted me too long. If she really loved my mother she will come to me."

The flash was now a blaze of light. The charwoman had vanished. The Fairy Godmother was there. "I bring you," she said, "the reward of Patient Suffering. I have never lost sight of you, but I was not permitted to help you till now; and even now only on a condition. But this condition is for your good, though how it is so you have yet to learn."

Then all the rest followed with which history has made us familiar.

When Cinderella became Princess, says the family historian already quoted, being as amiable as she was handsome, she gave her sisters magnificent apartments in the palace, and a short time after married them to two great Lords."

But did Cinderella's papa ever reappear? Did the Fairy Godmother take any further interest in her godchild? Once only she is mentioned, and that was when the one glass slipper fitted, and after she had drawn out of her pocket the other slipper the Fairy suddenly appeared, and with a touch of her wand changed Cinderella's drudge's clothes into a magnificent dress. Then, without a word, she disappeared; and whether she ever returned, or was even thanked, is not recorded in any history of Cinderella that I have been able to consult. The age of this Cinderella of Mr Millais' is, I have said, between fifteen and sixteen, just two years before the Royal party. she is in dreamland, where Mr. Millais met her, and that cap on her head is another remnant of finery which one of her half-sisters has thrown away.

My own opinion is that when Cinderella became Princess the wonderful story was published everywhere, and that her old father, who was on his last legs at Boulogne-sur-Mer, suddenly turned up, borrowed a considerable sum, and was among the first to call at the Palace, where he was warmly received by his daughter, and less warmly by his son-in-law, who, however, provided him with a comfortable berth, and a liberal allowance of his favourite beverage. Still, we have no exact data as to facts, and until the family name of Cinderella's father is made known to us the very existence of the family itself will remain for ever shrouded in mystery.

The slippers, unless broken, may be under a glass case in Queen Mab's museum. But if we run after the "may be's," they are as plentiful and as difficult to catch as summer butterflies—and, when caught, about as useful. So "here break we off."

"THE BURGOMASTER'S DAUGHTER."

There is a quaint old-world homeliness about Mr. Boughton's Dutch pictures that is not less appropriate than it is peculiar. Even about this contemporary young lady there is something *sui generis* of demure simplicity in her comely face of antique Protestant propriety, if not Puritan primness, in her neat coif and closely snooding head gear, her cosy furred ruff, and old-fashioned tippet. I should guess that she is trudging through the snow to or from church; or, stay, as it is Christmas time, she may very likely be on some errand of mercy. Be this as it may, here or at we should meet her later sledging on the canal in a gaily painted ark, like a miniature galleon, or at home with mutual friends in the Stadt-hus—she looks, or will look, as though she had stepped out of a seventeenth century picture. But the mention of that time, and the word itself of "Burgomaster" seem to remind us also that the Netherlands have their glorious and heroic, as well as their peaceful domestic associations deathless memories of a War of Independence to which all Europe owes so much. I must, however, leave the many pleasant or moving thoughts which this picture may evoke to my readers' imagination—merely adding that the picture is engraved by permission of Messrs. Arthur Tooth and Sons, Haymarket. T. J. GULLICK.

"PUSSY'S PERQUISITE."

A very lucky pussy is Master Tom to have a mistress to feed him out of her own cup and saucer; and one so pretty withal, in her antique dress, as well as so kind and gentle. And a very happy little mistress is she to have such a fine handsome Tom so patient and so well-behaved. As she grows up the little lady will still have a pet, be sure—to tend and love. This pleasant picture is engraved from the Decorative Art Exhibition in Bond-street,

CHRISTMAS ECHOES.

BY GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA.

Samuel Rogers, Poet and Banker (and one of the kindliest-hearted men that ever said bitter things about people), discoursed long ago, and delightfully, concerning the "Pleasures of Memory:"—

> Childhood's loved group revisits every scene,
> The tangled wood walk and the tufted green
> Indulgent Memory wakes, and, lo, they live!
> Clothed with far softer hues than Light can give.

Yes; Memory is "the first, best friend that Heaven assigns below;" and it may be made to "soothe and sweeten all the cares we know;" still, the faculty is one that has its duties and responsibilities as well as its pleasures. If you wish to keep your memory bright you should rub it up periodically, and spare no amount of furniture polish. Nay; now and again you should take it to pieces and put it together again, as George Stephenson used to do, first with clocks and afterwards with locomotive engines. If you find that your memory has grown so rusty that no friction with oil and vinegar, flannel, and wash-leather will make it shine again, you may feel tolerably sure that you, too, are rust-eaten, and close upon disintegration

Christmas is one of the Festivals of Memory. It is, as Washington Irving beautifully phrases it, "the season of regenerated feeling—the season for kindling, not only the fire of hospitality in the hall, but the genial flame of charity in the heart: the scene of early love again rises green to memory beyond the sterile waste of years." But did you ever try, as an exercise of Memory, to recall the successive "festive seasons" which you have spent? Did you ever strive to count your Christmases?

I am afraid that I know what the answer to this question, in many cases, will be. "I don't wish to make myself miserable," A. may reply. B. may quote Byron, and decline to call up—

> The spectres whom no exorcism can bind,
> The cold, the changed perchance the dead—anew;
> The mourn'd, the lov'd, the lost,—too many! yet how few!

C. may say, with Goldsmith—

> Remembrance wakes, with all her busy train,
> Swells at my heart, and turns the past to pain.

D. may remind me that Longfellow writes that "The leaves of memory seem to make a mournful rustling in the dark;" while E. may warn me Heraud passionately inveighs against "the hungry vultures of memory." Never mind the poets. Never mind even the sublime "Nessun maggior dolore." Exercise your memory in the last week in December, and strive to summon up the Christmases of the Past.

Young folks should experience but little difficulty in this respect; although some trifling confusion of mind may possibly arise as to the precise dates of the grand comic Christmas pantomimes which have been witnessed at the Theatres Royal. Still, as a rule, the Christmas roll can be easily recited. There was the Christmas when the Mysterious Magician supplied by Mr. Cremer, junior, performed such astounding conjuring tricks in the back drawing-room; the very merry Christmas night when it was so extremely difficult to procure cabs, and when four ladies, five children, and one gentleman (on the box) had to go home in one four-wheeler. There was the Christmas when Uncle Joseph, who had quarrelled with papa ever so long ago, made his appearance on Christmas Eve, beaming with smiles and laden with drums, clockwork steamers, boxes of *bonbons*, and a rocking horse. There was the Christmas when, papa and mamma being in India, we were left at Dr. Retula's Classical Academy at Hazelnut-on-the-Heart, or at Miss Piminy's Establishment for Young Ladies at Starch Green. There was the Christmas when we were sick: and the Christmas when young Mr. Poplar said such remarkably soft things to Aunt Louisa behind the window-curtain. There was the Christmas when a baby was born, and the Christmas when another baby died.

But, when you have become suddenly, like remembering of one's Christmases is a task of no small colour. You may not be so old as to be constrained to say, with Spenser—

> The care full cold hath nipt my rugged rind,
> And in my face deep furrows eld hath plight;
> My head besprent with hoary frost I find,
> And by my beard the crow his claw doth wright.
> Delight is laid abed, and pleasure past;
> No sun now shines, clouds have all overcast.

Still; you are not "as young as you were." The image of the dentist tills far too prominent a place in your mind to be pleasant. You take a lively interest in the advertisements about Hair Restorers; and from time to time you are cognizant of dark and distant rumours in your household touching somebody—it cannot, surely, be you—who is a "Disagreeable Old Thing." Never mind the dentist and the Hair Restorer advertisements, never mind the growing need for spectacles, and the inclination to go to sleep after dinner. Be of good heart and count your Christmases.

I have a tolerable memory; but I am sure that, without referring to scattered and irregularly kept diaries, I cannot recollect half my own Yules. Some of them were very merry, and others extremely miserable; but as to many more my mind is a blank. Perhaps the unremembered Christmases were moderately felicitous ones. "The boundary of Man," says Owen Feltham, "is Moderation. When once we pass that pale, our Guardian Angel quits his charge of us." Perhaps, after all, the moderate and forgotten Christmases were the pleasantest ones. Happy are the people who have no history.

Out of a dim and chaotic vision of the Christmases of my nonage—a jumble of snap-dragon, mince-pies, plum-pudding, crackers, Astley's Amphitheatre, oranges, sawdust, Mr. Ducrow, and Mr. Widdicombe, the riding-master; Children's parties, the apothecary he called on the morrow of Boxing Day—rhubarb and magnesia, forfeits, the Adelaide Gallery, Mr. Perkins's steam gun, and a hopeless attachment for somebody with very large blue eyes, pink cheeks, and flaxen ringlets (perhaps it was my sister's doll), in a white muslin frock, a pink sash, and frilled trousers there arises a distinct image of a Christmas in Paris when I was a boy at school, A.D. 1840. My sister and I dined with an English family domiciled in the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré, directly opposite the British Embassy. *Ay de mi!*

I have an acute remembrance of that Christmas Day; because we had no plum-pudding. A mighty one had been made by the lady of the house; but she had an Irish cook, *Ay de mi!* No pudding made its appearance after the turkey and the roast beef; and the alarmed hostess, proceeding to the kitchen, found the cook sitting on the floor surrounded by broken crockeryware and the *debris* of an utterly ruined and uneatable plum-pudding. The sedent cook was brandishing a rolling-pin, or a dripping-ladle, I forget which; and she was flourished this strange wand she sang a song, of which the burden was the only part I remember.

> Hooroar, up she rises!
> Hoorour, up she rises!
> What shall we do with the drunken sailor?

They knew very well what to do with the tipsy cook, who was very summarily turned out of doors. She had loved, not wisely, but too well. A *pompier*, I believe: and in a fit of amorous despondency had taken a little more than was good for her. *Ay de mi!*

There was very nearly being another plum-pudding catastrophe on a Christmas Day which I spent (very delightfully indeed), in 1876, at Buyukderé, on the Bosphorus. Our genial hostess had a female cook, a Greek. This descendant of Fair Helen of Troy had a weakness, I think, for bottled stout. Perhaps it was for *raki*. Otherwise she was an ornament to her sex, and a capital *γαγιρισσα*. But the bottled stout or the *raki* got the better of her on Christmas Eve; and her mistress was fain to discharge her. She was a lady with a temper; and, prior to her departure per steam-boat for Constantinople, she discharged a whole volley of anathemas on the entire household. She cursed the dogs and cats; she cursed the carriages and horses; she cursed the baby: and, in particular, she cursed the plum-pudding which she had made, but had not been permitted to boil. Her malisons were fortunately unavailing; and the pudding turned out splendidly.

I can remember two American Christmases. One I spent, in 1863, at Montreal, in Canada, with a very dear English friend, who is yet flourishing, and who will live, I hope, to enjoy many more and jovial Christmases, at home. On Boxing Day we were bidden to dine with a certain gallant General, whose name will ever be associated (as his patent of baronetcy is) with the heroic defence of Kars; but on Christmas Day itself we dined at an excellent hotel called the St. Lawrence Hall. It was a stirring time, in Canada. The Scots Fusilier Guards (not Scots Guards then) held their mess at the St. Lawrence. The Coldstreams (or the Grenadiers?) and the Sixtieth Rifles were also in garrison in the city; and society was enlivened by the presence of a large number of Confederate ladies, exiles from the Southern States. "The Bonny Blue Flag!" "I wish I was in Dixie," "The Homespun Dress," and "Maryland, my Maryland," were more favourite ditties at the St. Lawrence than "John Brown;" or "The Sky Blue Coat."

Mem.: Do you collect (with discrimination) visiting cards? I do; together with bills of fare. I always steal the *menu* when I go out to a notable dinner; and have sometimes found the butler's eye fixed sternly upon me, as though he doubted whether a spoon might not be the next article which I should appropriate. But these trifles awaken, oft times, the strangest of memories. I was looking, the other day, through a book full of cards gathered in Canada in 63-4. Mr. D'Arcy Magee. Poor fellow. He was, you may remember, foully murdered. Mr. John A. Macdonald. He is now a baronet. John Wilkes Booth. *His* end we all know. Major Wolseley. Ah! He is to be Lord Wolseley of Cairo, I hear, not Lord Wolseley of Egypt.

A Christmas in New York. That was in 1873. I think that we had eleven invitations to dinner. I know that I had no dinner at all, and sate all day in an arm-chair before a huge fire at the Brevoort House, half choking with bronchitis. But what a merry time we had on New-Year's Day at Delmonico's, and on Twelfth Day at Wormley's Hotel, Washington! "Home again!" after a long absence, has a pleasant sound; but I prefer that of "well again," after a short, sharp fit of sickness.

A Christmas in Berlin. When was that? I think in 1865. We did not know anybody in that enormous, splendid, and not newly disagreeable city. We dined at five o'clock, at the table d'hôte, at the Hôtel d'Angleterre, by the Schlossbrücke, and I think we went to the Opera afterwards. There was plum-pudding at dinner. I do not like Berlin.

You see that I have abandoned anything approaching chronological order; for I have miserably failed in the attempt to remember my Christmases, categorically. For example, memory leaps back to two Christmas Days spent, not at home, but behind the scenes of a theatre. The first was in 1846, the second in 1851. On both occasions it was a matter of business. The pantomime was to be produced on Boxing Day; and we had to work very hard to give the finishing touches to the grand entertainment. I had nothing to do with acting in these pantomimes; but I had something to do with "getting up" the first one and writing the other. In the first-named year I was very poor; and my Christmas dinner (cost me nine-pence) came from a coffee-shop in Castle-street, East. But about nine o'clock in the evening I went down to a soup-kitchen somewhere near Leicester-square, where Alexis Soyer, the famous *chef*, had been superintending the preparation of a substantial Christmas dinner for a multitude of poor folk. The friendly Alexis gave me a huge slab of plum-pudding. I had to go back to the theatre to work; and I made a present of the pudding to the young ladies of the *corps de ballet*. They told me, the next morning, that it was very nice; but some of them looked very pale and thoughtful.

I must have spent at least half a dozen Christmases in Paris during the past five-and-twenty years; and they were passed under all kinds of circumstances. Nearly every one of the good fellows with whom I dined, say, twenty years ago are dead; so I will not endeavour to count those Christmases.

There was a Christmas Day at sea. I forget the year. It was in the Mediterranean. There were sixty-four passengers on board: and about twenty sate down to dinner. It was blowing a "capful of wind" (it never seems to blow a hat full), and we had the "fiddles" on the dinner table. They pitched fearfully; and when there were ten." Subsequently she rolled; "and then there were five." It was an agreeable Christmas Day; but it lacked repose.

Did you ever spend a Christmas Day in Whitecross-street Prison? I have had such an experience. Probably, you do not even remember where the old jail for debtors was situated. The Sheriff of Middlesex on the occasion to which I refer (it was about 1849) had not been honoured with instructions from the Superior Courts at Westminster to capture my body wheresoever I might be found "running up and down in his bailiwick" (as if any sane person desired to run up and down in a bailiwick); and I went to Whitecross-street, not as a prisoner, but as a visitor to a friend who was the publisher of a weekly paper, and was incarcerated at the suit of Her Majesty's Commissioners of Inland Revenue for unpaid advertisement duty. Those were the days in which every advertisement paid a tax of one shilling and sixpence to the Government. There were cumulative penalties for non-payment; and I think that, nominally, my friend owed the Revenue about a quarter of a million sterling.

We took this luckless publisher some beef and pudding and a basinfull of that peculiar "stodgy" mock-turtle soup which you see resolved into a thick jelly in the windows of the ham and beef shops. It was a royal entertainment. The jail was full of prisoners, and every one, down to the very poorest, were feasting plentifully. Those who had no money and no friends were comforted with beef, pudding, bread, and beer at the charges of certain endowments, many of them of very ancient origin, called "Prison Charities." These endowments have since, I believe, been diverted to educational purposes. On the ground that Imprisonment for Debt is abolished, and that there are no poor prisoners to relieve. As a matter of fact, I believe that between six and seven thousand debtors are annually flung into jail under the provisions of the County Courts Acts; but these persons (the majority of whom are as poor as Job) are only imprisoned for "Contempt of Court," you know.

I mind the old coffee-room at Whitecross-street well. There was a roaring fire at one extremity of the room; and above the mantelpiece was emblazoned (by some captive herald painter, possibly) a gorgeous achievement of the Royal arms. Beneath this was the inscription "Dum Spiro, Spero." The flow of beer seemed to be unlimited; and the air was thick with the fumes of tobacco. Songs, comic, pathetic, and patriotic, concluded the festival. It was an English version of "Hans Breitmann's Barty"—behind walls neatly surmounted by *chevaux de frise*. "Fere is dat barty, now?" Gone away into the very dimmest of the *eveiglicli*, I fear. The history of all prisoners, I suppose, is augmented on Christmas Day; but the roaring coffee-room, the smoking, the singing, all belong to a state of manners long since passed away.

Only one more Christmas, and I have done gossiping. It was in 1866. I had heard the cannon of Custozza, and had been out with Garibaldi in the Tyrol; I had seen Venice surrendered to General Le Boeuf (a name to recall at Christmas time) by the Austrians, and by the General handed over in the name of France to Italy. So, after a rather exciting year, we came down to Rome, Mother of Cities, to winter at the clean, comfortable, and joyous Hôtel d'Angleterre in the Via Bocca di Leone, near the Via Condotta: reasonable prices; one of the best table d'hôtes in Italy; and at that table d'hôte, and after it in the smoking-room, the very best "talk" in Europe. A worthy Frenchman, M. Antoine Gondre, was the landlord: but he should have been Mine Host of the Garter, or that famous purveyor Master Harry Bailly, who "personally conducted" the Canterbury Pilgrims, so merry did Monsieur Gondre make us all at Christmas, 1866.

This excellent Boniface is dead: but I was at the Angleterre again last winter, and found the house, in the hands of M. Silenzi, as comfortable and cheerful as ever. And CHRISTMAS, 1882, will, I hope, be added to the Christmases which I have spent in Rome: for I have no kindred, now, to gather round my board: and if I am to pass the Great Festival in a foreign land, I judge it best to pass it in the beloved city whence my grandsire came, a Roman citizen, more than a hundred years ago.



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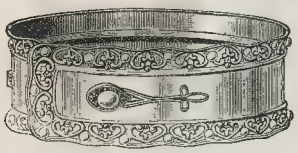
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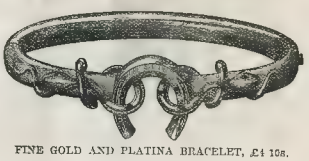
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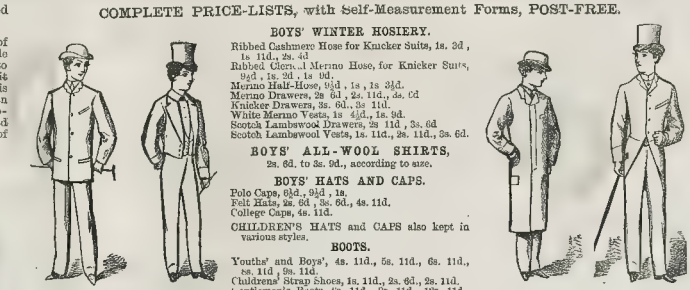
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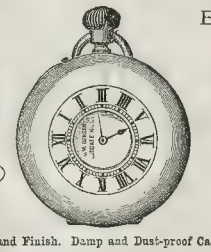
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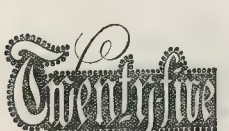
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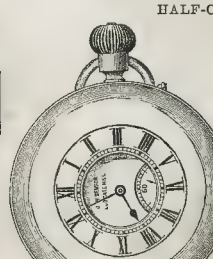
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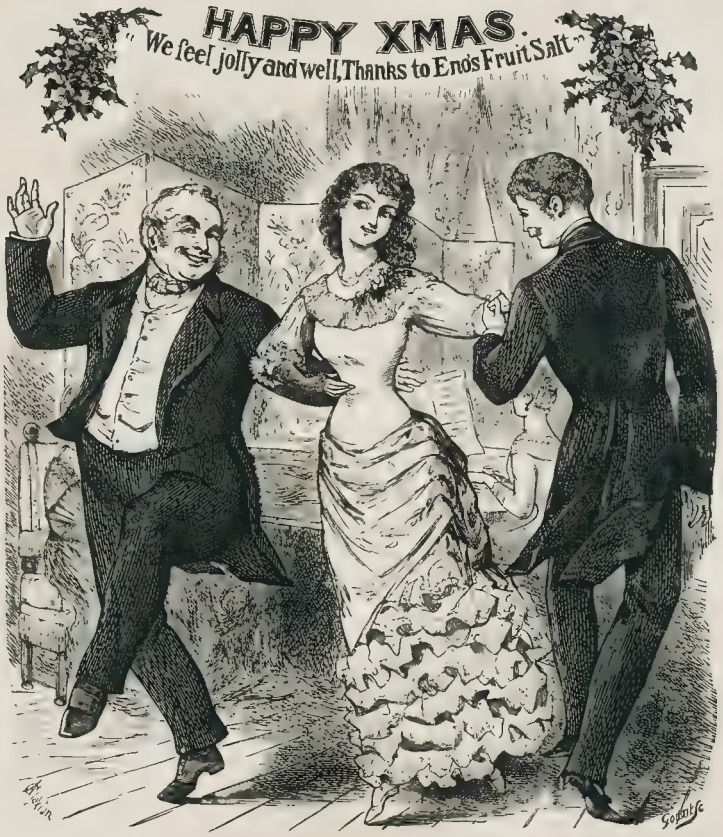
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It's no in books; it's no in lear,
To make us truly blest;
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We may be wise, or rich, or great,
But never can be blest."—*Burns.*

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How to enjoy good food, which otherwise disorders the digestive organs, causing bilious headaches and impure blood. Use **ENO'S FRUIT SALT.** Also as a refreshing, cooling, and invigorating beverage, use **ENO'S FRUIT SALT.** It is the best preventive and cure for biliousness, sick headache, skin eruptions, impure blood, pimples on the face, giddiness, feverishness, mental depression, want of appetite, sourness of the stomach, constipation, vomiting, thirst, &c., and to remove the effects of errors of eating and drinking.



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I PREFER IT TO ANY OTHER
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